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with pleasant remembrances
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wishes of The Author

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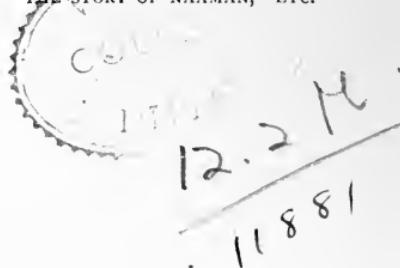
THE
CONQUEST OF CANAAN.

*LECTURES ON THE FIRST TWELVE CHAPTERS
OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.*

BY

A. B. MACKAY,
MONTREAL,

LECTURER IN SACRED RHETORIC, PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE; AUTHOR OF
"THE GLORY OF THE CROSS," "THE STORY OF NAAMAN," ETC.



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TO
JAMES JOHNSTON,

Chevalier of the Order of Cluny,

ONE OF HIS EARLIEST AND TRUEST FRIENDS,

THIS VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

Montreal Oct. 13th, 1884

P R E F A C E.

THESE lectures on the first half of the Book of Joshua, delivered in the ordinary course of my ministry, have, I believe, been of some help in opening up this very interesting portion of the Old Testament Scriptures to those who have heard them, and they are now published in the hope that they may be of some service in a wider field.

A. B. M.

MONTREAL, 1884.

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I.

THE OLD LAWGIVER.

“Moses my servant is dead.”—JOSH. i. 2.

THESE are sad words and solemn ; a melancholy beginning to this new page in sacred history. So must orphaned Israel have thought as she sat weeping in the plains of Moab, forgetting in the great grief of that month of mourning her bright hopes and high destinies. Never, till Shiloh come, will she see his like again. The feeling of every heart in that wide camp is expressed by the inspired epitaph, engraven on no costly cenotaph, but, better far, imprinted on the page of the imperishable Word—

“ And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel ” (Deut. xxxiv. 10-12),

“ Moses, the man of God ! ” What a sublime place does he occupy in the history of Israel and of the world ! Where can we find his peer ? Abraham, David, Daniel, Paul rise up before the mind’s eye to challenge comparison ; and, like peaks in Alpine regions, each in turn may seem the loftiest according to our

point of view. But take him all in all, this famous legislator, with his protracted training and severe trials, his chivalrous heroism and matchless meekness, his soaring wisdom and vast humility, his winged words and mighty works, has scarce his peer in the whole circle of a fallen humanity. At least we can certainly say, that he towers high above the common level of mankind in the majestic simplicity of a life entirely consecrated to God ; in the strong heaven-born faith whereby he spurned all the glories and honours of the most splendid kingdom in the ancient world, to cast in his lot with a race of slaves ; in the unruffled calmness of a soul which kept constant communion with Heaven ; in the vehement chivalry of a heart that blazed with fury against all oppression and injustice ; in that deep diffidence which is the best evidence of transcendent ability ; in the unparalleled magnanimity which refused all honours incompatible with the well-being of the people whom he lived to serve, even from the hand of God Himself. Such things as these, and many more that could be mentioned, display his marvellous faithfulness as a steward over God's house ; and gazing on him, do not our admiring eyes instinctively rise upward from the servant to the Son, from the type to the antetype, even to that "Prophet like unto Moses," whom all mankind must hear ?

This is the man who has passed away. God Himself makes the announcement to Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead." Well may Israel mourn his loss. Well may we consider his end. It was quite in keeping with his illustrious life. It was the grandest death that man could die. Balaam the seer might have had his eyes filled with its glory when he cried, "Let me die the

death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

THE DEATH OF MOSES WAS USHERED IN BY NO DECAY.

In this respect it was a striking exception to the rule. Usually the ravages of disease make sad havoc with our feeble frame ere the soul finds release from its tenement of clay ; or the relentless tooth of Time slowly saps the foundations of physical and mental vigour till even the grandest natures present a pitiable spectacle. There is no euthanasia granted to the mightiest or the noblest.

" From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
And Swift expires a driveller and a show."

Not such was the end of Moses. His mental vigour was unimpaired when he passed away. We have evidence of this in that wonderful book of Deuteronomy, which Jesus loved to ponder and to quote. It was composed immediately before his death ; it was the inspired lawgiver's commentary on the law ; the Magna Charta of all the prophets who came after him ; the spiritual arsenal from which in after ages each faithful teacher procured his sharpest and most polished shafts to hurl at the consciences of faithless brethren in apostate days. Witness also the grand swan song into which he bursts before its close ; one of the most remarkable and sublime compositions in the Word of God, in which Moses pours forth the sum and substance of all his warnings and exhortations in a flood of molten emotion. Witness the beatitudes that follow, wherein the seer pierces with prophetic eye the dark future and perceives the final consummation, when Jehovah shall

remove all iniquity from Israel and write His law upon His people's hearts. Surely such exercises as these betoken a mind in a state of the highest vigour and activity.

And as it was with the mind so was it with the body. Moses had no look of a dying man as he left the camp and climbed to Nebo's brow. There was no gray hair among his raven locks, no weary wrinkles on his lofty brow, no ashy paleness on his healthful cheek. With firm foot he trod the slopes of Abarim. With eagle eye undimmed he scanned the distant scene. No painful and protracted illness, with the tide of life ebbing and flowing in sickening uncertainty, was his sad portion ; no decrepit old age, when the evil days come and the years draw nigh in which there is no pleasure ; when all life is colourless and tasteless, and the daughters of music are brought low ; when fears are always in the way ; when the almond tree flourishes and the grasshopper is a burden and desire fails. No such dreary experience was his, ere the silver cord was loosed and the golden bowl broken. In fullest vigour of mind and body Moses passed away. What a blessed exodus was this ; more a translation than a death. An active, useful, holy life ; a speedy death,—could there be a greater blessing if we have to die ?

Again, THE DEATH OF MOSES WAS EMBITTERED BY NO REGRET. Moses was not dragged up that hill unwillingly, like a malefactor to his doom. His departure certainly reminds us of the greatest trial and the bitterest disappointment he ever had to endure—his being forbidden to enter the promised land. Very touching was his earnestness, very pathetic was his pleading with God for permission to enter in. “And

I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and Thy mighty hand : for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to Thy works, and according to Thy might ? I pray Thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me ; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee ; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes : for thou shalt not go over this Jordan " (Deut. iii. 23-27).

It was a trial great and painful thus to be shut out of the land.. The most unsusceptible heart must sympathise with his sorrow. But long before the hour of his departure came, the struggle and the bitterness were past and gone. All was settled. All was well. When the command came to ascend the mount Moses was ready. There were no vain regrets and unavailing tears. There was no indulgence in rebellious sentiment and anxiety ; no nervous and fearful activity in winding up the affairs of life ; but contrariwise, there was profound, calm, and courageous submission to the Divine will.

How instructive and consolatory is all this. It may be a very severe struggle to part with those who are dear to us. It may be a bitter disappointment to leave, as we think, our work unfinished, our brightest hopes and holiest ambitions unrealised, but it cannot be worse with us than it was with Moses. Let us then, like him, anticipate the evil day. In good time let us

honestly face all the possible sorrow and disappointment, and learn, like him, to overcome through faith, obedience, and humility. The Father of consolations and the God of all grace is able to comfort and strengthen our hearts, so that we will be able to say, it may be with tears and yet with perfect peace, "Thy will be done." Let us, like Moses, so live and so prepare for our departure, that when death comes there may be no unavailing regrets and futile rebellion; but instead, the calm restfulness of a soul prepared; the singing of Simeon's sweet song which, as the father of modern philosophy has well said, is the best cure for the dolors of death, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."

Still further, HIS DEATH WAS DARKENED BY NO DISMAY.

Of all the multitude in Israel that loved him, not one was with him. Joshua had, forty years before, accompanied him up Sinai's rocky steeps to the very skirts of that cloud which covered him for forty days and nights, and he would have esteemed it the crowning honour of his life to have attended his master with loving devotion to the very end; but it could not be. Miriam, the eldest of Amram's children, died in Kadesh, surrounded by all she loved. Aaron, the second, and greater than she, ascended Mount Hor by Divine command, and there, stripped of all the symbols of his high office, but comforted by the ministry of a brother and a son, he fell asleep. Now Moses, the youngest and the greatest of these three, all alone ascends Mount Pisgah to his grave. Alone but undismayed he passes from the presence of the living to the place of the dead, his past experiences making the path plain. And

while alone he knows right well that he is led by the unseen hand of Jehovah to Himself, therefore no shadow of fear darkens his heart.

Can we not picture that solitary chieftain, after bidding a last farewell to the fathers of the tribes, slowly, calmly, and with perfect confidence walking upward? Weeping thousands watch him from the vale beneath. Never more will they behold that familiar and majestic presence. Mothers at the tent doors hold up their little ones and point out the great Prophet, that his form may be imprinted on their memories for ever. A solemn hush is resting on the camp, as if each ear was strained to catch the rustle of the wings of the angel of death. They speak only in softest whispers. See, Moses has reached the mountain's brow; there he stands, as he has often stood before, between Israel beneath and heaven above, God's glorious Mediator. See, his hands are uplifted. He sends them back a silent benediction; his last, and more impressive far than any ever uttered by his lips. They wipe their eyes from blinding tears. They gaze again. He is gone. They see him no more. Alone, alone, alone, he has passed into the presence of his Maker. Yes, and we too, whatever the circumstances of our end, however tender and unsleeping the ministry of loving hearts and gentle hands that soothes our dying moments, alone must enter death's dark door and be ushered into the presence of our God. Alone, yet not alone; alone yet not unfriended, if we know Jesus who is there; alone yet undismayed, if like Moses we trust in Him, for He has said "I will be with thee." Then our hearts with peaceful and precious faith will make response: "Though I walk through

the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

Lastly, THE DEATH OF MOSES WAS BRIGHTENED BY GREAT CONSOLATION.

Though Moses was not permitted to enter into the land, the bitterness of the sentence was greatly mollified through the goodness of God. Ere he closed his eyes in death, God granted to His servant a glorious vision of that goodly heritage prepared for his people, and so strengthened his undimmed eye that by one long look he took in all its riches and beauty.

From Jordan rolling in full flood, with the fragrant city of the palm trees nestling near, on to where the Great Sea kissed its sacred shore, one rich and varied garden, dressed in the fresh beauty of the spring, lay smiling at his feet. Its verdant vales and vine-clad heights, its flowery meads and glistening olive groves, its fertile fields rich with promise of a glorious harvest, its mountain slopes sprinkled with fleecy flocks, all seemed prepared to give an eager welcome to the people he had led so long. The very breezes murmur their delight, and by them stirred to rapture, every branch in every forest clasps its leafy hands.

Oh, it was a heart-inspiring, soul-refreshing sight ! From the rich pasture lands of Bashan, green with tender grass, to the rocks of Carmel dropping honey ; from the burning sands of the south, where the dim mirage is resting, to the cool, clear snowy peaks of Lebanon rising like God's own sentinels to guard the goodly land, his ravished eye is flitting ; and as he gazes with rapture on the scene, a well-known voice proclaims, "This, this is the land, the land which I

sware unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying: 'I will give it to thy seed.'

Moses must take another fond adoring look on this heritage of Jehovah. His eye is riveted by yon lofty peak, crowned with eternal snow, gleaming across the green, and standing out so massive yet so shadowy between him and the calm blue sea beyond. As he gazes the scene dissolves into something infinitely more glorious. That snow-capped height brightens into a great white throne. For that calm sea he beholds the glorious sea of glass; for that rolling flood and the smiling land of Canaan, the River of the Water of Life, and oh, sight of ceaseless rapture! the Paradise of God!

"Behind he hears Time's iron gates close faintly,
He is now far from them ;
For he has reached the city of the saintly,
The New Jerusalem."

How this was brought about we know not. It is written, "He died by the mouth of the Lord;" and while we know that this means "according to the word of the Lord," yet we do love that old Rabbinical rendering which says, "He died by a kiss from the mouth of God." Does not this give us the sweet essence of the act? Surely God closed His faithful servant's eyes with a kiss of love. Yes, and He gave His angels charge over the sacred dust, so that even his mortal body should be honoured, and in good time transformed into a spiritual body, fit for the brilliant company of a translated Elijah and a transfigured Saviour.

"By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On yon side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.

And no man dug that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er,
But the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

“ And had he not high honour ?—
The hill-side for his pall,
To lie in state while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rich pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave,
And God’s own hand in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave ?

“ In that deep grave without a name,
Whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again—most wondrous thought !—
Before the judgment day,
And stand with glory wrapped around
On the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life
With the incarnate Son of God.

“ Oh lonely tomb in Moab’s land !
Oh dark Beth Peor’s hill !
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
And teach them to be still.
God hath His mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell ;
He hides them deep, like the secret sleep
Of him He loved so well.”

“ So Moses the servant of the Lord died.” From that strange cradle which the hand of faith fashioned, and which, rocking on the ripples of the Nile, was committed to the keeping of the covenant God, to that strange grave which the hand of God hollowed out on the lone hillside, and which Michael guarded, what a noble and glorious life was spent. Yes, dear friends, and you and I, though neither prophets nor bards, lawgivers nor kings, may learn many a lesson

from it. "As the honest carpenter said, 'I like to read about Moses. He carried a hard business well through.' Are you a widow, with a large family to bring up and educate? A merchantman, with many cares and anxieties, many hazards and losses? A householder, with many likings to consult and many tempers to study? Cast yourself upon Him whom Moses in every emergency consulted, and depend upon it, He will carry you well through." Yes, and when your eyes grow dim to all on earth, when the labours of life are ended, and you lay your weary body down to rest, then the vision of God's redeemed will flood your soul with rapture, and as you seize the golden harp with holy hand to strike its trembling strings in praise of the Lamb who was slain, ten thousand times ten thousand voices round will cry, "This, this is the land, the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

II.

THE NEW LEADER.

"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister."—JOSHUA i. 1.

"**M**OSES my servant is dead." As we think of this, are we inclined to exclaim: "What a calamity! This is a huge disaster, an irreparable loss! How unfortunate that it should have occurred at this critical juncture in Israel's history! How sad that this great leader should pass away when he was most needed! that he should fall ere his work was finished!" Nay, nay. These are the ejaculations of unbelief. The truth is, Moses has done his work. Another is required to carry it on and is here provided. For Moses to have continued any longer at the head of Israel would have been inexpedient. Joshua is the man for this epoch, the God-trained hero for this chapter in Israel's history, therefore Moses must pass away. So is it evermore. In Providence, God makes no mistakes. He buries the workmen but carries on the work. With the hour always arrives the man, and his predecessors must pass away. Both the laying down of the old and the taking up of the new are for the perfecting of the Divine design, and therefore we may always rest assured that God never lays aside any

instrument until it has accomplished all He had intended and prepared it to do.

See this workshop and its tools, conveniently arranged to the workman's hand. Watch him, and you will find that in perfecting even one article, he uses many tools, simple and complex, common and rare, cheap and costly. This world is God's workshop, and men are the instruments in the hands of the Almighty. In working out His bright designs, He requires many and widely-different instruments. At one time He needs Abel to taste of death prematurely, and head the roll-call of faith as the first martyr of true spiritual worship. At another He needs Enoch to exhibit the life of faith and its rapturous triumph over all the power of death. At one time He needs Noah to be separated from the world of the ungodly by the waters of judgment. At another He needs Abraham to be separated from the same evil world by His word of power and promise. At one time He needs Moses to lead His people out of the house of bondage; at another He needs Joshua to lead them into the land of promise; and it is written, "He led them out that He might bring them in." Moses was for Joshua and Joshua was for Moses. Thus there is demonstrated the consolatory fact, that after all God is the grand agent in all the evolutions of history. He alone is over all, blessed for ever, ruling among the inhabitants of the earth. In the lapse of ages innumerable instruments are raised up to perform their various tasks; when their little piece of the great work is done they are laid aside, but the work is carried on from generation to generation, until at last, by the accumulated moieties of every individual, great and small, obscure and famous, wise

and foolish, good and bad, the Divine ideal is perfectly realised.

It has been said, "Great men have no successors." But if we look at history in the light of the truth just enunciated, and mean by successor one who takes up the work where his predecessor has left it, and develops it according to the Divine ideal, then all men, great and small alike, have successors. But if by successor is meant, one who does exactly the same thing and fills exactly the same place as another, then it is clear that no man, great or small, can have a successor, for no one can do in every particular the work of another; no one can exactly fill the vacant niche of another. As Pascal puts it, "You cannot produce the great man before his time, and you cannot make him die before his time; you cannot displace nor advance him, nor put him back; you cannot continue his existence, and replace him, for he existed only because he had his work to do; he exists no longer, because there is no longer anything for him to do; and to continue him is to continue a useless part." To this also agree the words of the poet —

"The voice that from the glory came
To tell how Moses died unseen,
And waken Joshua's spear of flame
To victory on the mountains green,
Its trumpet tones are sounding still
When kings or parents pass away;
They greet us with a cheering thrill
Of power and comfort in decay."

A worthy successor to the great leader had been found. The Divine choice, a choice which had been revealed to Moses before his death, and which greatly

gladdened his heart, had fallen upon Joshua. Anxious for the welfare of Israel, even at the hour of his bitterest disappointment, he had prayed:

“Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in ; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him ; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation ; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord : at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did as the Lord commanded him : and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation : And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses” (Numbers xxvii. 16-23).

There were reasons for this choice of Joshua which we do well to consider ; for if his preparation for this high place was not so romantic or so miraculous as that of Moses, it was none the less effective and Divine ; and just because of the lack of those marvellous elements which entered so largely in the preparation of Moses, that of Joshua is more instructive to the great

majority of God's servants. His training was, like ours, of a more homely pattern.

It can scarcely be doubted that JOSHUA'S LINEAGE had something to do with God's choice. When Moses was about thirty-seven years of age ; living in the utmost luxury and magnificence in the court of Pharaoh, acknowledged as the son of his daughter, looked up to by all as the presumptive heir of that splendid crown, handsome, brilliant, and accomplished, the paragon of perfection ; in a lowly hut in the land of Goshen a boy was born. His parents were slaves, and though the bloody edict enacted in Moses' infant days had long since been repealed, these serfs had felt to the full the bitterness of bondage. But notwithstanding all, they had not lost faith and hope in God ; and we get a glimpse into their souls' state through the significant name they gave their firstborn. They called him "Hoshea," that is "Salvation." Surely their infant's name is the very echo of their father Jacob's dying words to Dan, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord."

How many hopes spring up around the cradle of a child. It is the most fruitful garden of hope upon this earth ; and if Nun and his wife were but slaves, if their surroundings were depressing and the outlook dark and lowering, still they had loving godly hearts, and hope came to their lowly home with that helpless babe ; came to hover dove-like o'er his cradle, and whisper to their hearts that dear name, which slightly modified by Moses brightened into that of "JESUS," the symbol of a race's hope, the sweetest name in earth or Heaven. How grandly, how high above all their fondest dreams, were their hopes realised. This book,

the first in the Bible that bears the name of a man, unfolds their fulfilment. That babe, grown to man's estate, became the great warrior who perfected the salvation God had in store for His people, by leading them into their goodly heritage. Aye, and his name became the prophecy of a still greater salvation, even that of God's own Son, who is called Joshua, or Jesus, because He saves His people from their sins.

We cannot doubt that his mother, as well as Nun his father and Elishama his grandfather, would do everything in their power to fill his heart with the hopes which their piety had crystallized in his name. Who knows, but grieved at the lengthened inactivity and indecision of Moses, they looked and prayed for another instrument to perform the Lord's work? It does seem certain that at that time a vague expectation of deliverance had been floating about in the hearts of these brick-makers and hod-carriers. The time, even the "set time" of their deliverance must be nigh. The secret of Moses' parentage must have oozed out, and would naturally form the sheet anchor of all their hopes. Moses we know expected from his brethren an immediate response to his friendly advances, and was much disheartened by its lack. And perhaps the tone of the taunt with which he was repulsed was all the sharper because of his own protracted idleness and seeming indifference to the fate of his countrymen.

Be that as it may, we can well believe that Joshua was brought up in an atmosphere of hope. Some of the earliest and most vivid recollections of his infancy and childhood must have been entwined with the past history and future hopes of his people. It is more than likely, from what we know of the habits of the ancient

Egyptians, that in a corner of his father's lowly dwelling stood an object which often excited his childish wonder and curiosity. It was a mummy case, painted all over with strange devices and curious figures, which with its somewhat faded richness presented a strange contrast to the mean furniture of the dwelling, and when the sun shone on it had attracted his eye even when he lay an infant in his cradle. And by-and-by, when he learned the meaning and the history of that strange heirloom, his curiosity deepened into awe, and that mummy case with its silent tenant preached many a solemn sermon to his young and pliable heart. "Within it," we can easily imagine his mother telling him, "are preserved the bones of Joseph." "And Joseph! who was he?" the boy might enquire. "One of your ancestors, for your father and grandfather are descended from Ephraim, who got the birthright of the elder when Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph." "And what was Joseph?" he might further ask. "The Saviour and the Prince of Egypt. Now we are slaves. You see how hard your father has to toil in making bricks, but it was not always thus. Long, long ago, when our forefathers first came to this land, they were greatly honoured and favoured by the king because Joseph had saved Egypt from destruction." "But why do you keep Joseph's bones?" "Because when he lay dying he gave commandment concerning them, saying to his brethren, 'I die, and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.' And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel saying, 'God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.' So Joseph died, being a hundred

and ten years old, and they embalmed him and he was put in a coffin (Gen. l. 24-26). Ephraim was the first to look after this sacred trust, so that the solemn oath might not be broken. He bequeathed it to his son, and so each in turn took care of it with most steadfast fidelity, till now it is in our possession, and we must not lose sight of it lest the solemn oath of our fathers be broken, and we suffer for our unfaithfulness. Once it rested in the palace of a prince, now it is here in the hut of a slave."

The child would listen and ponder, and look with new solemnity on that sacred trust; then he might ask, "Mother, was that true which Joseph said when he was dying?" "Yes, my boy." "Then we are not to remain here always, and father and grandfather are not to work so hard and be scolded and lashed by these cruel overseers?" "No, no; there is a beautiful land from which Joseph came, not flat like this, but having green hills and valleys; a land where rain falls from heaven to make the grass and the flowers grow—a land flowing with milk and honey." "Then why do we not go at once—

"Mother, oh where is that blissful shore,
Shall we not seek it and weep no more?"

"We must wait God's time. We are His people and He knows what is best." "Will it be long till that day comes?" "I cannot tell, but I do not think it will be very long, for God said to our great father Abraham that we would go back to it in the fourth generation, and the time must be near. We all thought it had come when Amram's son, Moses, was raised so high and looked upon as the heir of Pharaoh; but he

has been gone several years, and no one knows what has become of him, and so we must just have patience and wait God's time, knowing that He always speaks true ; and we must remember above all to take care of Joseph's bones, so that they may not be left behind when we leave this evil house of bondage."

How must such communications as these have fired the heart of this young hero, and moulded his character. Is the child the father of the man ? See you not in these early surroundings sufficient to account for his after character and high destiny ? How eloquently must these silent bones of Joseph have spoken to the heart of this young Hebrew, and how fitting that the faith of the dying Joseph should work like faith in this far-distant descendant ; and what an admirable providence that a son of the man that brought Israel down to Egypt for their salvation, should be God's instrument to establish the nation in the promised land. Learn that the influence of a good man lives long after he has passed away. More than a century after he was dead Joseph's bones preached to Joshua his first sermon. "The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot."

Thus the influences that surrounded Joshua in his youth must have moulded his character and prepared him for the place he took, first as Moses' lieutenant, then as leader of Israel ; and the assurance of the truth of Joseph's dying words must have mollified the bitterness of "that cruel bondage, while beneath a burning, rainless sky he toiled with other sons of Jacob, naked and in gangs under the lash in the quarries or brickfield, or followed the oxen over the shadeless furrows, or in long rows monotonously thrashed out the corn, while

the gay barges of their masters sailed up and down the canals and rivers, and the royal chariots with their outriders, and the priests and officers of state, passed unheeding along the streets." How in such misery would he cling to that blessed hope! When he reached mature manhood; for he was forty-three at the time of the Exodus, and the news ran like wildfire through all the homes in Goshen that the long-lost Moses had returned; had returned with a definite commission from God, whom he had met in the wilderness, to lead Israel forth; had returned with a definite demand to Pharaoh, "Let my people go;" how his heart would bound with joy and overflow with gratitude! The dreams of his boyhood are now to come true. He also will have his part in the glorious redemption.

The difficulties attending the early stages of the negotiations would not sour or dishearten Joshua. Every visitation of judgment would be a confirmation of his faith, and every trial a purifying furnace to remove his dross. He would hear from his father and grandfather, who were elders of the important tribe of Ephraim, the precise particulars of the Divine commission, and while they, with the other elders, were under Moses and Aaron attending to the more difficult and important matters in connection with the proposed Exodus, it is very likely that, following his natural bent of mind, he would be actively employed in attempting to organise the people and prepare them for a simultaneous movement. Possibly in this connection he was first brought under the notice of Moses, who with the eye of a master, at once recognised his zeal and capacity, and at the very first encounter with an enemy put him at the head of the army. It is plain

that after the arrival of Moses the people were a-tiltœ with expectation. Every plague-stroke on Egypt was like a trumpet-blast giving to Israel the order "Fall in;" a fact ignored by those who would have us believe that the Exodus came unexpectedly on Israel; a fact overturning all their elaborate arithmetical calculations. They were no undrilled rabble, but by the exertions of Joshua, and others of like spirit, as well as by these startling providences, a disciplined host, fitted to march *en masse* at a moment's notice.

Thus while this champion first steps into the arena when Israel confronts Amalek, we may well suppose that he had done yeoman's service before, and his fitness and aptness for his life's work must have depended in great measure on home surroundings. So will it be to the end. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." It is something to be the heir of a great name; it is better to be the heir of a great piety.

JOSHUA'S CHARACTER had also to do with this choice. Its constituent elements were noble and simple, easily understood and readily appreciated. He was every inch a soldier, brave and manly, simple in habit, straightforward in speech, cool-headed, warm-hearted, energetic, swift in thought and action. He was firm as a rock, true as steel. Nothing could exceed his fidelity. How true was he, above all, to his God! Did he not cleave to His word with iron tenacity in spite of every danger? Given a clear command from God, there was no rebellious debate, no sullen facing of difficulties, no timorous weighing of consequences, but contrariwise ready and cheerful obedience. So was he with his master. He never failed Moses. At all times he was

jealous for his honour, and would tolerate nothing derogatory to his dignity and authority. He was even true to his enemies. He kept his word and carried out his engagements, in the spirit as well as the letter, though trapped by guile into the making of them. He changed not, though he sware to his hurt. His courage also was of the loftiest kind. It could face not only enemies, but, harder far, misguided friends. He had no dread of unpopularity, no failing of heart because he was in a minority: he feared not the face of man. His courage not only led him into the thickest of the fight, there to deal the heaviest blows against the enemy; it also enabled him to stand unmoved like a great rock in a raging sea, in the midst of a mad and mutinous multitude. Like all noble natures, Joshua was also unselfish, humble, and modest. He had learned to obey, and was therefore fit to command. He never once sought to spare himself at the expense of others, but was always ready for any service. Did he not stay for forty days and nights in utter loneliness, scorched by the noonday sun, drenched by the dews of night, waiting, like a faithful sentinel, the return of his master from the cloud-covered peak, and seeking no comfort till he came?

His patience and hopefulness were also very marked, and much needed in the leader of such a people as Israel. We shall find in the records of the conquest of Canaan that he was able to endure the fatigues of the march as well as the rush of battle, not fainting under the hardships of the weary campaign, but ever on the alert to push every advantage to its utmost limit, and always, by his cheerful bearing and cheery words, keeping up the hearts of the people. Thus he

led them with irresistible force and consummate skill. We shall also find that he was a leader alert, circumspect, prudent, leaving nothing to chance or the chapter of happy accidents, but doing everything that foresight could suggest for the attainment of the end in view. He was a man, in short, in whom was the spirit of wisdom, a warrior of God, whose help was Jehovah. Oh for more men of his mettle in the army of the Cross !

JOSHUA'S TRAINING had also to do with this choice. When he was put at the head of the people he was no novice. He was three years older than Moses had been when he was called from the feeding of his flocks to the leadership of Israel. Joshua was the oldest man in the camp with the single exception of Caleb, therefore he was a man of experience and ripened wisdom. He had many schools and school-masters during those eighty-three years. We have already spoken about that home school, in which his parents were the teachers, and therefore there is no need to refer to it, further than to say that here he received the most valuable lessons. This was the granitic foundation of all his subsequent greatness. He was also taught in the grand and stirring school of the Exodus. Here God Himself was Joshua's teacher. Great national events have a high educational value. The stimulus of stirring times is deep, formative, and all pervasive. Now, where in the whole sweep of human history can we find anything to compare with the deliverance of Egypt ? All revolutions in history, all the birth-pangs of the greatest nationalities, dwindle into insignificance when compared with the marvellous things done in the sight of this people, in the land of

Egypt, in the field of Zoan. What an educational influence must this have had on a susceptible heart and mind. What a training in trust did it afford Joshua—trust in the real presence and Almighty power of Jehovah. Still another school furnished Joshua with valuable instruction, and that was the camp of Israel. If by the wonders of the Exodus he was taught to know God, by the conduct of Israel he would learn to know man. Day by day he would be learning how to command and lead. And without doubt, the crowning lessons in this long preparatory course would be imparted in the tent of Moses. His intercourse with his great master, so close and cordial, so confidential and long-continued, would constitute his chief training for the office he has now to fill. Moses' tent was Joshua's college. He would learn there how difficulties had to be dealt with, how some matters had to be seized with a strong hand and others touched with all delicacy. Even a fool would have picked up a smattering of wisdom in such company; how much more a man of Joshua's capacity. And in addition to all this, the very fact that he had been associated so long with Moses as his lieutenant would not only prepare himself but also the minds of the people for this change. To them it would look quite natural, and to him it would be much more easy.

This choice of Joshua had also reference to the character of the work that had to be done. It is all one to God to work by any instrument or no instrument, but we generally find that there is a correspondence between the work to be done and the agent employed. The great work now before Israel is to conquer and divide the land. This was a kind of work most

congenial to Joshua, and for which he had received special preparation. Moses was a lawgiver, Joshua was a soldier. He is the right man for the present work, as Moses was the right man for the past. And the first stage of Joshua's work, in expelling the Canaanites, would prepare the way for the second stage, the partition of the land. Gratitude for past victories, combined with the knowledge of his justice and unselfishness, would ensure to the greatest possible extent contentment in the partition of the land. Just as the last warrior President of the United States was called after his victorious campaign to the highest civil office, and received a wider and more enthusiastic recognition of his services than perhaps any of his predecessors, so Joshua crowned his conquering work by those civil acts which ensured the peaceable settlement of the country.

Also, this significant choice had reference to the great plan of God in the economy of redemption. In the interpretation of Old Testament Scripture two schools call for notice here. The first we may call the fanciful. Men of this school are type hunters. Every allusion, every hint, every event is pressed into their service. They will find a type in anything, sometimes in nothing. From a vivid imagination and a grotesque association of ideas, the most fanciful interpretations are evolved, and Scripture becomes a nose of wax in their hands to be twisted and distorted as they please. Then there is what we may call the matter-of-fact school. These men are type haters. They can see types nowhere, and even when they are referred to in the New Testament they are grudgingly acquiesced in and industriously toned down.

We need never look to such for pith and spiritual refreshment. The marrow and fatness are eliminated, and their teachings are dry as dust. Midway between these opposite poles is the place of safety and spiritual profit; and it is well to bear in mind, on the one hand, that the word as it stands is always laden with valuable lessons, to which we do well to take heed in the first place; on the other hand, that this is not the word of man, but that of Him who knew and arranged the end from the beginning: therefore we are not to read it as we would a newspaper, taking a meagre minimum of meaning out of it; but with a profound submission to the analogy of faith, and a devout carefulness for every jot and tittle of Divine truth, have at the same time an open eye for those pictures of the highest spiritual truths which God, the great and wondrous teacher, has embedded so richly in the Scripture narratives.

It is appropriate to refer to these matters at this point, for the Church in all ages has found in the deliverance from Egypt, the march through the wilderness, and the entrance into Canaan, a picture of spiritual realities. And if such an interpretation is legitimate, as we think most assuredly it is, surely such an outstanding and momentous event in their history as this change of leaders, must have some definite and peculiar lessons to teach. Consider some of these. "Moses my servant is dead."—Thus said Jehovah. Therefore Moses brought no one into the inheritance. Israel lost sight of him for ever, before they put down a foot in Canaan. If they are to pass over that Jordan, and possess the land, it cannot be under Moses. This act of leadership is deliberately taken out of his hands

by God Himself. Surely the lesson is plain to all who know the essence of the Gospel. Moses is the grand representative of the law, for "The law was given by Moses." Therefore, here we have an Old Testament symbol of the New Testament truth, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight." The law brings no one into God's heritage. Are you looking to the law, thinking that under its leadership you will get into the inheritance? You will never succeed. But is it not written, "If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments"? Truly it is, and if you can keep the commandments then you may enter in, but if you offend in one point then you must be shut out. If you look to the law for salvation, life, Heaven, you must look to it exclusively. You must expect no mercy, no grace, no relaxation of its demands. There can be no excuse for failure, no overlooking of a single fault. The law cannot bend, it cannot accommodate itself to your weakness. What a striking instance of this inflexibility do we find in Moses himself, shut out of the land for the one fault. The law is weak through the flesh. The law can bring no one into the inheritance.

But what Moses could not do Joshua was raised up to accomplish. If we would enter into God's inheritance we must turn from Moses and look to Joshua. Who was he? A man in all points made like his brethren; not nurtured in Pharaoh's palace like Moses, but born with them in Goshen, sharing their burdens, labouring side by side with them, afflicted in all their afflictions, bearing their griefs and carrying their sorrows. Joshua was the man who fought their battles and became their Captain of Salvation. And all the while he was under the great lawgiver, the servant of Moses, most faithful

and faultless. Who cannot see here a picture of God's own Son, "made of a woman, made under the law." This is the man who leads into the inheritance: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Would you enter into life? Look not to Moses and Sinai. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Turn from the law to the Gospel. What is your hope of glory, Moses or Jesus?

Yet we must never dream that Moses and Joshua are antagonistic. There is no need to put the law against the Gospel or the Gospel against the law, as if there were a quarrel between them. There is no quarrel in God's economies. Just as Moses and Joshua wrought together for the same great end, so is it with the law and the Gospel. But it is objected: are they not entirely opposite to each other in principle? Does not the law say "Do," while the Gospel says "not of works"? Most assuredly. But as two wheels in a watch may move in exactly opposite directions, and yet fit into each other and unite for a common end, so is it with the law and the Gospel. If Joshua carried Israel over Jordan, did not Moses bring them to the bank? In the great joy of crossing that river and entering into that land, are we to ignore all the work of the wilderness? By no means. Even so, if our souls bound with joy because of God's salvation, we are not to depreciate the work of the law. "The law of the Lord is perfect," and because we are not perfect, it cannot bring us in. Again, "the law of the Lord is perfect," and because it is perfect it converts the soul. Does it not turn the soul from all its good notions con-

cerning itself? Does it not make the sinner cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone"? It is a poor conversion in which the law of God does not play its part. Where there is a real work of God, sooner or later its power is felt. As Moses prepared the way for Joshua, who brought the people into the inheritance, even so "the law is our Schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." "Moses my servant is dead, now therefore arise, go over this Jordan."

III.

THE COMMISSION FOR THE CONQUEST.

“Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”—JOSHUA i. 3.

THERE are few historical documents more interesting than those which contain some plan, command, or resolution, which when carried out had a widespread influence for good or evil on the human race. See this scarce decipherable scrawl, pencilled in hot haste yet with steady hand and cool, calculating brain, when armies reeled and victory trembled in the balance, containing the command which launched the decisive thunderbolt and won the day in that great fight which modified the destinies of untold millions. Surely such a document cannot be looked upon without emotion. With similar feelings must we regard this commission received by Joshua, for it is one of the most famous in the history of the world, the grand and sufficient warrant for all his work of conquest, the justification of every deed done in dispossessing the Canaanite of his land.

To begin with, THIS COMMISSION WAS DIVINE. This is its most notable characteristic, a point that cannot be overlooked. The order for Joshua and his army to advance came from God Himself. He who has given His creatures all that they possess, He who keeps in

His own hands the power of life and death, He who can work His righteous will and take away that life which sinners have forfeited by any instrument He please, whether deadly pestilence, or rushing wind, or flaming fire, or wasting famine, or mighty conqueror, —He, and He alone, urges Israel to this awful work. Jehovah, not Joshua, first gave the command, “Forward!” to Israel’s hosts. “The Lord spake unto Joshua.” How He did so, whether directly or indirectly, by audible voice or inward illumination, by dream or vision, by Urim and Thummim, we know not; but this we do know: the directions now given, the plan of the campaign now revealed, were clearly and unmistakably Divine.

It is important to bear this in mind, otherwise we shall misunderstand and misinterpret not only the whole teaching of this book, but the whole history of Israel as a nation. However solemn the step now taken, God commands it. “Deus vult” is written on every page of this history, however stained with blood. Joshua does not take the initiative; he waits for marching orders, and only when they are received does he take action. Surely, therefore, there is a radical difference between this war and all others we have read of in profane history, even when it is acknowledged that they have been waged for a righteous cause. Joshua was no bandit or freebooter, eager for plunder; no Alexander or Napoleon, consumed by the lust of power and the greed of empire. No pangs of “earth hunger” drove him on, no fever for fame and glory, no craving for earthly immortality. He was simply a servant, carrying out the commands of a superior. And in truth, there was a Divine necessity for this commission.

If the Divine purposes are to be carried out, if the programme of Providence is to be adhered to, if God is to have His own way in His own world, if He is to be true to His promises, if His call is not to remain a dead letter, if He is to keep His place as the Judge of all the earth, some such commission was a necessity. To this effect the Divine word had been pledged hundreds of years before.

Is there anything analogous to this in the spiritual sphere? There is. God does not in these days call the Christian to any war such as that to which He called Joshua; yet there is a holy war, a glorious crusade, in which He would have us all warriors. Therefore is it written, "Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness unto God" (Romans vi. 13). Before every one of us He places a double battle-field. There is an outer fight, and the field of battle is the whole world, according to the Gospel commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." There is also an inner fight, and the field of battle is the heart, according to that holy exhortation which urges us to bring every thought into subjection to the Lord Jesus. As certainly as God put before Joshua the conquest of Canaan, so certainly has He put before us the evangelization of the world and the sanctification of the soul. Take possession of the whole world and of your entire nature, in My name, says our Great Leader. And there is a Divine necessity here also, inasmuch as the Divine word has declared on the one hand that the earth shall be filled with the glory of God, and on the other that we are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

We shall find, as we study this conquest of Canaan, a wonderful similarity between that fight of Joshua and this fight of faith, both in its outward and inward aspects. As related to Christian evangelization, the Book of Joshua corresponds to the Acts of the Apostles ; as related to Christian experience, we have its counterpart in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Turning again to Joshua's commission, we find that it was **CLEAR IN ITS TERMS**. There was no indefiniteness or ambiguity in these marching orders. No doubt could arise in the mind of Joshua as to what God desired him to do. "Arise, go over this Jordan," said the Lord. Arise! The wilderness journey is at an end ; the time to take possession has come. Arise from these weary disciplinary wanderings to high and heroic achievements. Arise from the comparative inactivity, and unfruitfulness, and disgrace of the past forty years, to the dignity of your calling and to strenuous toil, which shall have noble issues. Arise, with no confidence in your own might or sufficiency, but with hearts trained to trust in Him, who has marched before you in cloud and fire. Arise from your sack-cloth and ashes, to don the panoply of the warrior. Weep no more for Moses, but with hearts solemnized by his departure, with hands strengthened for your work, show your respect for his memory by emulating the noble deeds in which he delighted. "Moses my servant is dead ; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan."

Even so our commission as Christians for our two-fold fight is clear as day, and as emphatic as the Divine lips could make it. Therefore the removal of every valiant soldier of the Cross should be a mighty stimulus to those who are left behind. We best revere the

memory of the good and great who have passed away, by giving all diligence to the work which was so dear to them.

Yet Joshua's commission, though clear, was DIFFICULT TO CARRY OUT. Notice its terms: "Go over this Jordan." Think what that implied. Look at that river, brimming full from bank to bank. Deep and rapid is its flow, swollen by melting snows from Lebanon and plentiful spring showers along its course. A strong swimmer would have a hard task in crossing that rolling flood; and this command is not for Joshua and a few picked warriors, but for the whole congregation of Israel, the old and young, the women and children, as well as the vigorous and hardy. And there is no ford or bridge, no boat or materials of any kind, wherewith to make the crossing easy. Is not this commission hard to carry out? Joshua is here put in as great extremity as was Moses at the Red Sea. As mighty a miracle is required now as then, if this word is to be obeyed. Aye, and the crossing of the Jordan is only the first great difficulty among many. Even if it were passed in safety, there still lay before Joshua and his followers the conquest of all the land. This first step would only be the beginning of great and terrible deeds. The miracle of Moses at the Red Sea was wrought to deliver Israel from their enemies. This will be wrought to bring them face to face with them. And these are enemies as famous, in their way, as the chivalry of Egypt. To dispossess them of their land will be no child's play. Their mighty fortresses have to be stormed, their frowning battlements thrown down, their gigantic warriors slain. Who is sufficient for these things?

Often, in like manner, obedience to the Gospel commission implies the facing of difficulties which to the eye of sense are insuperable. Look around. How wide is the great field of the world ; what a mastery over human hearts have the hoary and gigantic systems of superstition ! How strongly are they fortified in all the avenues of approach. And how insufficient for the work does the foolishness of preaching seem. Look also within. How formidable are the strongholds of evil, how gigantic the sins that have entrenched themselves in the soul. Who is sufficient for these things ? The fight of faith is never easy.

Still further, we cannot forget that this commission of Joshua was **TERRIBLE IN ITS CONSEQUENCES**. When we think of its bearing on these Canaanites, we can conceive nothing more appalling. Joshua's commission tolled the knell of their national existence. They were strong, proud, and prosperous. They had a history and a literature of their own. They boasted themselves of their past achievements and their present position. They stood in the van of the world's culture and prosperity. But henceforth, and in virtue of this very commission, their name will be blotted out from the page of history. "They instituted and extended commerce, but a spoil will be made of their riches, and a prey of their merchandise." This commission, faithfully carried out, implies nothing short of their utter extermination. Again and again its terrible and sweeping terms are repeated. "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but shall utterly destroy them." These nations were like the grass of the field, and Israel was God's scythe to cut them down.

What a contrast to all this have we in the commission

of the Gospel and the present work of the Lord Jesus. When on earth He said, "I came not to destroy men's lives but to save them," and the work He has given His followers now to do is a work of salvation. Surely then we should be all the more eager to carry it out. Ours is a war not of death and destruction but of life and salvation, both in its inner and outer aspects. Yet our commission is as thorough-going as was that of Joshua. We are to give no quarter to any evil, to proclaim no truce with sin. We labour to destroy the body of sin, to pluck up root and branch all that opposes itself to God, to exterminate evil in every corner of the heart, in every quarter of the globe.

We must also remember that, though terrible, the commission of Joshua was **ALSO RIGHTEOUS**. When we consider its dark side, we may be staggered, and standing aghast before the terrible destruction it implied, we may feel inclined to ask, Can it be justified? Superficial and unbelieving minds have never had any hesitation in answering "No" to this question, and therefore in condemning the ways of God; but a fair consideration of the facts of the case will lead to a different conclusion. This destruction of the Canaanites had long been predicted. When Abraham pitched his tent and built his altar in the land, though he received a promise concerning the whole of it, he never possessed a foot of it, except his sepulchre, and that he bought. Why was this? Because the iniquity of its possessors was not yet full. God's transfer of the land would not be effected until its inhabitants had by their exceeding sinfulness forfeited all right to its possession and all claims on His forbearance. In dealing thus with the Canaanites, God exercises the right which not only all

sovereigns but also all proprietors exercise, viz., that of ejectment in certain circumstances. In this case nothing was done in undue haste. The Divine patience that had borne with these evil tenants for four hundred years was marvellous ; and they grew worse and worse all the time. The gracious pause of forty years, after He had made bare His mighty arm before all flesh, by the wonders done in Zoan's field, and proclaimed that the time had come when He was to give this land to Israel, should have won submission. If now they resist His action, it is at their peril. Never tenant had longer or more emphatic warning to quit than these Canaanites. But they laid none of these things to heart. Like Pharaoh, they hardened their hearts against God, and shut their eyes to their righteous doom. That they had reached a pitch of wickedness scarcely conceivable is abundantly evident. So bad were they that even their heathen neighbours were horrified at their abominations. The rites of their idolatrous worship were so unspeakably obscene, that their neighbours declared avowed atheism was better than such a detestable religion. Thus, even on the testimony of those who might have been thought to sympathize with them, it is evident that they had sunk so low as to forfeit all right to national existence, and that, as the Divine Word declares, the very land as loathing them was ready to spew them out. Jesus, the Son of God, gives the righteous principle which underlies all such national catastrophes in these words, "Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Wherever the body corporate becomes hopelessly corrupt, wherever the impure and the unjust batten like loathsome reptiles on a carcass, wherever

the stench of universal social depravity and unrelieved political trickery taints the air, and the whole moral atmosphere is rank and poisonous, there of necessity the Divine judgment must alight.

If the war in which Joshua was engaged was righteous, how holy is that war by which righteousness and peace, joy and goodwill, are multiplied on the earth. The man who consecrates all his faculties to the downfall of evil, first within and then without, whose life is one long struggle against spiritual wickedness, acts according to the principles of eternal rectitude. "Holiness to the Lord" can be inscribed on his every achievement, for it is a victory of right over wrong, of purity over corruption, of light over darkness, of love over hate.

Still further, Joshua's commission was **BENEFICIAL IN ITS RESULTS**. The righteous act, if it seemed terribly severe at the beginning, is seen to be widely beneficial in the end. He who reads history cannot fail to see that impure and enfeebled races and nations have been the prey of those who have been comparatively pure and strong; and thus, by conquest, take it all in all, civilization has been advanced, and the state of the race as a whole ameliorated. Now if ever war was beneficial this was. Here God has written in letters of blood, "Better the wicked should be destroyed a hundred times over than that they should tempt those who are yet innocent to join their company." Better a bad limb be cut off than the whole body mortify. Such national surgery may be terrible, but it is beneficial. How beneficial was it to Israel! If all these nations had been spared, what spiritual havoc would have been wrought, what assimilation to evil would have been the

result. The remnant left was bad enough, what would the whole have been? Being beneficial for Israel, this war was beneficial for the world. The spiritual health of the world at that day depended on Israel. These wars of Israel, therefore, though in that very restricted area, were the wars of the world; the victories of Israel were the victories of the race. The extinction of spiritual life and worship in Israel at that time would have been the quenching of the last coal left to humanity, and therefore the extinction of hope and the destruction of the word of primeval promise. On the other hand, the faithful carrying out of this commission by Joshua was one of the greatest works ever done for the human race.

In like manner, by unflinching valour in the fight of faith, the children of God become the world's best benefactors. In conquering evil within and without, we not only do good to ourselves but to the whole human race. Among the best, though by no means the showiest, benefactors of mankind is the man who, keeping himself unspotted from the world, spreads abroad the knowledge of the name of Jesus. That word of the Divine Founder of Christianity still holds good, "Ye are the salt of the earth." Without this preserving salt of Christ-like souls how soon would the carcass become corrupt and the eagles of judgment alight.

Joshua's commission had also A WIDE REFERENCE AND A NARROW APPLICATION. It spoke of the country which stretched "from the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea towards the going down of the sun." Thus the inheritance of Israel

embraced a territory of great richness, beauty, variety, and compactness. It was a land fitted to become, as it did become, in the days of David and Solomon, the home of a great nation. Yet while Joshua's commission embraced the whole land, the land became the possession of Israel only as it was subdued acre by acre. Israel had all the land in virtue of God's gift; Israel had not a foot of it apart from the energy of that faith which made them conquerors. These ancient warriors had not only to take the title deeds, but also to enter into possession. To do the first was easy; to do the second was hard. They possessed the Divine inheritance only as they put down their foot upon it; that is, only as at the sword point they thrust out their enemies. Fingering their title-deeds, fumbling with their swords, dreaming about their splendid inheritance, talking about their high privileges, could never bring them into possession; they had to fight for every inch of ground.

Even so is it with the Christian. He has indeed a goodly heritage—a whole Heaven of spiritual blessedness. Hear how the title-deed runs: "All things are yours." "We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." But we cannot enjoy one of these blessings apart from the conflict of faith. How many Christians rest content with what may be called a mere geographical acquaintance with the truth of God. They know their catechism. They can repeat their creed. They have perhaps mastered the outlines of some theological system. They may even be able to draw charts of the different dispensations, and piece together the doctrines of Divine revelation, as children do the parts of a dissected map. Or, like Talkative in Bunyan's dream, they may be able to solve problems by means

of these doctrines, as by some algebraic formula ; and they dream that this playing at possession is all that is expected of them. Miserable delusion ! Spiritual, actual possession must be carried on at the sword point, and is exactly measured by the extent to which we dispossess the soul of any Canaanitish evil. Only as we put down the sole of the foot in actual experience do we really possess. There is no such thing, constituted as we are, placed where we are, there can be no such thing as a peaceable possession. The experience of the eighth chapter of Romans must be preceded by that of the seventh. Without the tough fight and the great victory of that seventh chapter all peace is a snare, all possession a delusion.

And it is the same with the outer fight. God has set before us the whole world to overrun as soldiers of the Cross. But dreaming about the glory of the Lord filling the earth as the waters cover the channel of the deep, believing that this glorious day must dawn, even praying fervently for the joyous consummation, will never bring it about. There must be hard work. Men of means must give their money ; men of talent must give their wisdom ; men of energy must consecrate all their powers to this holy work. There must be strenuous, united, continued, well-directed effort ; a new measure of the missionary zeal of apostolic days. Without these the work must languish ; but given these, the whole world could be evangelized before the end of the present century, and the great harvest speedily gathered in. Think of Paul flying from shore to shore, like an eagle, on strong and restless wing. What would he have done in these days of easy communication all the world over ? Thank God that with

this closer binding together of the peoples of the earth, there has been a revival to some extent of the old missionary zeal. Notwithstanding, as a great missionary has truly said, as yet "the Church is only playing at missions." While we can point to many places and say, "See what God has wrought!" still there is only a thin fringe of scattered lights twinkling on the mighty pall of heathen darkness. What need, therefore, in these days to remember and carry out, with the single eye of whole-souled Joshua, our great commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

IV.

A GREAT PROMISE AND A STIRRING EXHORTATION.

“ Be strong and of a good courage ; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed ; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”—JOSHUA i. 9.

IF the commission which Joshua received was Divine, righteous, and beneficent, it also implied the endurance of many hardships, the facing of many and great difficulties. The carrying out of that commission would give occasion for the exercise of the most heroic self-sacrifice and the most arduous energy. But God never calls to a great and trying work without giving His servants glorious encouragement. If He commanded Joshua to march forward, at the same time He solemnly and unreservedly pledged His presence in these words, “ There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee ; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.” Thus supported and shielded, Joshua did not go forward with the anxiety of one who is uncertain of the result ; much less with the desperation of the man who leads a forlorn hope or the dejection of him who dreads defeat. This promise lifted every load from his heart, and clothed him with the calm enthusiasm of unconquerable might. What the heathen gods are fabled to have done with some of

their favourite warriors, God here and now does to this His first soldier-saint, sending him forth to the fray invulnerable, invincible. By faith in this great promise, Joshua is more than conqueror. Poor and tame in comparison is the "*Veni, vidi, vici!*" of Rome's great hero. God's presence is pledged to Joshua unconditionally and unalterably, and as mightily as in the case of Moses. All therefore must be well. Both negatively and positively does God give this assurance: "I will not fail thee, I will not forsake thee." He also gives it illustratively: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." This would enable Joshua to measure his future success by the gigantic standard of God's mighty works through Moses. How vast are the resources of power on which he can depend. And all this was pledged absolutely, without a single saving word or clause, without a single condition attached. All was founded on God's unfailing word. Oh, highly-favoured Joshua! Yes, and also highly-favoured saints, for even with a like great and precious promise, do we go a warfare against evil within and without. What matters it then that within the stronghold of the carnal heart there swarm many mighty sins? What though in the world social evils and pernicious errors are numerous and mighty?—the battle is the Lord's. We have the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee." We have the assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway." Therefore as with Joshua so with us; trust in this real and almighty presence will give strength, and joy, and victory. "We are more than conquerors through Him that loveth us."

In regard to both the outer and the inner conflict in

which we are engaged, we should always remember that we are on the winning side. When this assurance fires the heart, our blows descend with tenfold vigour and effect. We need such a promise as Joshua's in wrestling with the evils that lurk within the heart. Their name is legion, and they are very mighty. Jesus has pointed some of them out to us: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, theft, false witness, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, the evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Gazing on these spiritual sons of Anak, are we to give ourselves up as lost? are we to fall back in despair? Nay! The battle is the Lord's. "Forward" is the Divine command. "Not a man of them shall stand before thee." There is not one of these gigantic sins but will fall before the man who is strong in the Lord. We are not to make up our minds for defeat, but to march in the assurance of victory. God says, with full knowledge of each and all of them, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

And we have need of such a promise also in prospect of the outer battle-field. There are social evils and erroneous systems which, like Canaanitish hordes, have overrun and ruined the earth. Think what havoc is wrought by drunkenness, improvidence, and immorality. How can these be met and overcome? Many means have been devised, and we are thankful for all that has been done by education, temperance, better homes, and refined taste, but after all the one and only cure for every social evil is the Gospel. All other efforts only touch the outside; this works from within, and its reformation is lasting. Therefore, standing face to face with these social problems, pressing for solution, let us grapple

with them in the power of the Gospel. Listening to the bitter cry of the outcast and the degraded, let us haste to the rescue with the only means of deliverance. Our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

This same promise also gives us power as we face error of every kind. The enemies of the Gospel in these days are proud and boastful. If we were to judge by their shouts, we should think that the whole fabric of Christianity was falling to pieces. Have we anything to pit against these enemies? Most assuredly. Given hearts aglow with love to the Lord Jesus; minds illumined by His truth, consciences cleansed by His blood, spirits filled with the Holy Ghost, and they shall be as chaff before the wind. The Divine presence, as in the case of Joshua, is pledged to be with us. Almost in the identical words addressed to Joshua runs the New Testament promise, "Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (Heb. xiii. 5). Therefore with good courage can we say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear. What shall man do unto me?"

This great promise given to Joshua was followed up by a stirring exhortation. The pith and essence of this exhortation are concentrated in the words, "Be strong and of a good courage." Again and again, five times over within the compass of four verses, and with every variety of expression, is courage extolled and insisted on. Courage! Courage! Courage! Courage! Courage! this peal of bells rings out in all its changes. Why? Because Joshua was a coward? Nay, he had the heart of a lion, but because courage is the fundamental virtue in every saint of God, in every soldier of righteousness, in every witness for the truth. Courage

is the first-born of faith, the noble leader in the goodly choir of the Spirit's graces. Courage! Is this an antiquated virtue, a fossil specimen of Hebrew piety, needful enough in those rough warrior days of old, but useless now in this silken century? Nay, the New Testament exhortation runs thus, "Add to your faith virtue," that high-souled courage without which there can be nothing strong or noble in the character; yea, no visible starting-point in the Christian life. One of the great wants of the day is courage,—courage to confess Christ in every company and on all occasions; courage to hold fast to His every word; courage to do all His will; courage to follow wherever He leads. It is called good courage, and no virtue better deserves the epithet, for it is good whether we consider its qualities or its achievements, the throne on which it sits or the crown with which it is adorned.

It is good courage because it is obedient, not self-willed, obstinate, headstrong. "Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." Thus God commends the courage of which we speak. It goes hand in hand with obedience, indeed oftentimes it is only another name for obedience. Again and again the greatest exploits of courage have been summed up in the words, "I must obey God." Such courage is of the highest quality. It can never quail, because conscious of eternal rectitude. For defence or offence, the man who possesses this courage is mighty. What can touch the man who makes it his one object in life to obey God perfectly and

constantly. What can stand before him, when he wields with pure strong arms this sword of celestial temper?

Some talk as if it were a bold thing to cast themselves loose from what they call the trammels of God's law and the bondage of His revelation. Their cry is, "Let us break His bonds asunder and cast His cords from us;" and they delude themselves with the thought that to walk in self-will and rebellion is courage. Vain thought! it is the madness of the lunatic dancing in a house on fire. Yet how prevalent and powerful is the fallacy. When evil companions cannot by all their arguments persuade their dupes to walk in their ways, how often do they use as their last lever the accusation, "You are afraid!" "You are a milk-sop!" And alas! how often does the artifice succeed. Many a man, who could march without flinching to the cannon's mouth, has not the courage to face a volley of laughter. To obey is often a manifestation of the highest courage; indeed, as a matter of fact, there can be no true abiding courage in the heart of any man apart from obedience to God. The poet speaks simple truth when he says, "Conscience makes cowards of us all." Where can you find the man without fear, the man of lion heart? Where you can find a man with a conscience void of offence, purged from dead works by the blood of the Lamb. Such can always say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear; though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

It is a good courage also, because it is studious and humble. It listens to the admonition, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." Its aim being to obey all God's will, in the spirit as well as in the letter, it gives all diligence to know God's will. Accordingly, the hero of Jehovah meditates in God's law day and night; takes counsel not with flesh and blood, but with the living oracles, and finds therein all his comfort, strength, and light. Many who profess and call themselves Christians are content with the barest minimum of Divine knowledge. They have little desire for instruction and less for meditation. Of all dismal occupations, the worst would be to meditate on God's law day and night. Even when they read they declare they can make nothing of it. It is to them an utterly profitless task. Perhaps you try to keep your ears and eyes open through one sermon a week, and sometimes even this is a hard task, especially if it exceeds ten minutes in the delivery. You never profess to go twice to the church on the Lord's day, and for the weekly meeting that is utterly out of the question. Ah, friend, I see where you are. Shall I tell you plainly? What would you have me do? Pat you on the back; and polish up some pretty excuse for you, or shall I tell you the truth? Here it is. You are in the Church's hospital. Poor soul, you are invalided and unfit for active service. So far as active work is concerned, you are not only useless, you are an encumbrance. Your poor appetite for spiritual food is a bad sign, and all the worse because you have such a craving for other things. How quickly do the hours pass by in the concert-room or the theatre! Your soul can expand

with great delight for three hours at a stretch under the sublime disquisitions of the dinner-table, or the elevated conversation of the drawing-room, but the shortest talk about God's truth is very wearisome. Is it a wonder that you are miserable, filled with vague fears of death and judgment and eternity? Only by pondering and grasping God's word can you ever attain good courage.

This good courage, being obedient and studious, is also intelligent. It observes with watchful care the hints of Providence and the checks of conscience. It learns better every day what God's will is in all things. It is not blind and blundering, fierce and fanatical ; but fed by meditation and prayer, and illumined by God's truth, it marches forward with open eye and ear on its invincible path, knowing both what to do and how to do it.

What such courage has done and can do, time would fail to tell. It honours God, for it can go forward through rolling floods and round frowning battlements on the strength of His bare word. It strengthens the weak, it comforts the feeble. Oh, how helpful is one Great Heart in a band of timid pilgrims. The very sight of his bright sword and dinted shield inspires hope and gives a sense of security. How pleasantly he smooths each rugged hill by cheery word or merry song. How helpful to all is that high courage, which keeps the eye bright and the countenance serene amid scenes of danger and distress. Surely every follower of Jesus should anoint his head and wash his face, and bear a brave cheerfulness as the ornament of his soul. Are you ready to faint, brother, and give up the struggle? Pluck up heart, man, if not for your own sake for that of others. Be not a burden to your brethren. Can

you not lighten some load? can you not brighten some care? can you not sweeten some cup? can you not smooth some rough path? can you not also shorten the road with a song, or at least bear a brave smile during this little while of trial, pain, and danger?

Remember, in conclusion, that such courage is the great secret of success. This above all things frightens our great adversary the devil. You remember the couplet,

“Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

And what does he do when that saint rises with the might of Divine courage in his soul? He turns and runs. Satan has no dread of learning, or wisdom, or riches, but he does fear the courage of a soul resting in communion with God. And well he may, for this courage arms the soul with Divine might. The coward is of necessity a weakling. His knees rattle, his hands tremble, his blows are badly aimed and feebly struck. The brave man can run through a troop and overleap a wall. God girdeth that man with such strength that even a bow of iron is broken like a reed in his hands. Well, therefore, may we listen with Joshua to the exhortation, “Be strong and of a good courage.” To face a difficulty boldly is to gain half the battle without a blow, and to ensure a thorough victory. When this is the soul’s attitude, “Then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, then shalt thou have good success.”

V.

BRAVE RESPONSES.

“Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, “Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.”—JOSH. i. 10, 11.

“And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.”—JOSH. i. 16.

JOSHUA has been set apart by the Divine choice to lead Israel into Canaan. He has been enlightened by a Divine commission, encouraged by a great promise, and stimulated by a rousing exhortation. Will he respond worthily, or will he prove a craven? Will he prepare himself for the battle now that the trumpet has sounded so loudly? Here we have the answer to such questions. At once Joshua responds to the Divine call by issuing a command to all the people, coupled with a special reminder to the ten tribes and a half (v. 10-15).

He loses not a moment in carrying out the commission of Jehovah. He did not talk about the matter, and hold a consultation with the elders as to what was the best thing to be done. He is all energy and action, and at once takes the necessary steps to put the mighty host in motion. When a great general was asked how he had won so many victories, he replied, “By never putting anything off.” Most successful men in every

department of activity could say the same. Certainly Joshua could.

And he is discreet as well as energetic. Folly and madness are sometimes exceedingly energetic and bring disaster. Always, to be useful, energy must be guided by wisdom. Therefore Joshua gave the command, "Prepare you victuals." Very strange must this command have sounded in the ears of Israel, for during the last forty years they had gathered their food day by day as the manna fell. But this sagacious and enlightened leader foresees that they could no longer count on this miraculous supply, that it would not be well for the work in hand to do so. The manna was a special provision in peculiar circumstances for an extraordinary need, and therefore not to be depended upon always. While this bread of Heaven was indispensable to the well-being of Israel in the wilderness, it could well be dispensed with in that land which flowed with milk and honey. Indeed the manna, while the best of blessings in the wilderness, would be a curse in the land ; for such a daily shower of daily bread in a fertile land would inevitably lead to idleness and all its attendant evils.

Also in the prosecution of the work to which Israel is now called, circumstances would continually be arising which would make it exceedingly inconvenient to depend on the manna for the supply of their wants. Often they would be so massed and so occupied as to make the gathering of it a great hindrance to the work. Accordingly, before the actual cessation of the heavenly shower, Joshua gave the command, "Prepare victuals." Prepare, for you must ; without wise foresight and careful calculation we will not be able to do the work.

Prepare, for you can ; you are no longer in a wilderness, but in a fruitful land where the fields are white to the harvest and abundance prevails on every side. Prepare, for you ought ; God's gifts are never bestowed to supersede our efforts. All the expectations we entertain in regard to God's help should harmonize with God's ways and manner of working. They should have a true and fit relation to our circumstances, they should display a sanctified common sense ; and they should stimulate to holy effort. Sometimes we have heard words like these fall from Christian workers : "I have faith to believe that God will provide the means necessary to carry on this work," and straightway they assume liabilities and enter into engagements, and incur debts, in violation of the plain command, "Owe no man anything ;" yea, they even sometimes accuse their brethren of lack of faith because they cannot do God's work in this way. This is not good. To obey is better than to profess great faith ; and to hearken than sentimental unthinking zeal. What would we have thought of Joshua, if after he had received the Divine order to march forward, he had said, "I have faith to believe that God will provide the food necessary for victualling the army all through the campaign ; our commissariat is absolutely safe, for it is in Divine hands. God has given us manna for forty years, He will not fail us now. He has promised to be with me as He was with Moses, I have no need to think of these things. All I have got to do is to hasten forward." Nay, nay ! Joshua manifested his faith in a much more Divine fashion. "Prepare victuals," he said ; do not expect that miraculous supply which has been granted for forty years, now that you are in a position to do

without it. You are no longer helpless children, but grown men able to provide for yourselves. The battle is the Lord's, and He will not fail us nor forsake us, but we must use all reasonable foresight in carrying on His work. We dare do nothing, we dare omit nothing, out of harmony with His ways.

The lesson is much needed in our day. When Jesus was giving His disciples directions as to the work they were to do, when He was absent from earth, He asked the question (Luke xxii. 35, 36, R.V.), "When I sent you forth without purse and wallet and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And He said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet: and he that hath none, let him sell his clothes, and buy a sword." When the work set before them was confined to the narrow limits of their native land, throughout which, from end to end, the fame of Jesus' mighty deeds was ringing, and all eyes were turned eagerly towards Him, they needed not to make any provision for its prosecution. But now that the work is world-wide, now that they are to be His witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth, even as Joshua said, "Prepare victuals," so Jesus says, "Take a purse, a wallet, and a sword." All will be needed for the carrying on of the work. How true is it. For prosecuting the great work, for which the Church of Christ exists, there is need of a purse wherewith to buy, a wallet wherein to store, a sword wherewith to defend. For Christian Missions to be carried on successfully we need, first, liberality, *i.e.*, consecrated purses; second, we need prudent care and business habits, the storage of liberality in prospect of foreseen wants, *i.e.*, well-filled wallets. This is just as important as the first. A

full purse in certain circumstances can easily make up for the want of a wallet ; but in certain circumstances —on the waste of waters or the waste of sands, on the ship of the sea or the ship of the desert—a well plenished wallet would be better for them than the heaviest purse. The wallet is the complement of the purse, and they help each other. The purse fills the wallet and the wallet saves the purse. The liberality of the Church should be judiciously stored. The Church should not live from hand to mouth, as she prosecutes her great work. We might call the wallet the fly-wheel which steadies the ecclesiastical machinery ; not allowing it to go too fast when the energy of Christian liberality is strong, not allowing it to go too slow when its power is feeble. We might call it the compensation pond in the arrangements that are made to supply the nations with the waters of life. Some Christians are all for liberality, without carefulness and foresight ; that is the purse without the wallet. Others are for prudence altogether, and are very stingy ; that is the wallet without the purse. The right thing is to have both. Then after the purse and the wallet comes the sword ; not to slay, as Peter was taught very speedily, but for preservation and self-defence. The labourers in prosecuting this work are to take all lawful precautions for their own safety. He who has given the command to preach the Gospel to every creature desires no useless waste of life in the carrying out of this commission. He instructed His followers, when persecuted in one city, to pass on to another. Paul again and again appealed to the political powers, that the work might be carried on unhindered, and all wisely directed efforts to enlist the sympathies and gain the protection of the powers

that be, in favour of Christian workers, is a carrying out of this injunction. This command of Jesus is exactly parallel to the command of Joshua, "Prepare ye victuals." It is sometimes asked in regard to those who preach the Gospel, "Cannot Jesus supply all their wants? cannot He defend them?" He can and He did. They lacked nothing when they went out without purse and wallet and shoes and sword. But it has pleased Him to order this work differently in these days, and for good and sufficient reasons. And it is the wisdom of the Church to fall in with His directions, just as it was the wisdom of Israel to obey Joshua's command.

The command which Joshua gave exhibited his faith as well as his energy and discretion. This energetic man is very prudent; and this prudent man is very truthful. Hearken to his words: "Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan." See this troubled river roaring from bank to bank. He will not wait till its waters fall, till its current runs less swift and they can find the fords and cross in safety: "Within three days we pass over." And notice how very confidently he speaks. He does not say, "We will attempt the passage," but "We will pass over;" and yet he has no transport corps, no pontoon bridges, no boats or rafts or means of crossing of any kind. Is not this the foolish swaggering of bravado? Nay, it is faith not staggering, because God has spoken. He who stood by Moses in that hour of sore distress, when the command came, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward;" he who marched beside him through the deep, between the green waves, "mysterious walls of crystal"; he who, on the further shore of that Rubicon

of Redemption, heard the mighty chorus drown the roar of the returning waves,—he could now in calmest faith proclaim, “Ye shall pass over this Jordan.”

Dauntless courage and high hope also kept step with his faith. “Ye shall pass over,” he said, “to go in.” No doubt the enemy is in possession of the further bank, and it will be to his interest to prevent our entrance, yet he cannot hinder us. Mere human wisdom might have said, “Will not the Canaanites mass their force on the further bank whenever they see a movement in the camp of Israel, and strive to hurl back this wave of invasion?” Thus the barbaric Britons met the veteran legions of Rome, and well-nigh gained the day. Thus the three hundred at Thermopylæ opposed the hosts of Persia. “Will not these well-trained warriors keep with ease this Thermopylæ of Canaan against these nomads of the wilderness?” Such questions as these never seemed to have entered the mind of Joshua. “We go in,” he said, as if he were speaking of a holiday parade. “We go in to drive the enemy before us and possess the land.”

Warlike leaders have often fired the enthusiasm of their followers by glowing pictures of the glory they would gain, the conquests they would achieve, and the honours with which they would be crowned, under their leadership; pictures which as a rule were never realised. Joshua puts before Israel a sure hope. “We come to go in; we go in to possess.” Thus he spoke: “It is a country which we shall not only conquer but hold, not only hold but inherit. It will pass down as a possession to our children’s children. God is even now bestowing it upon us. The hearts of the Canaanites are failing because of us. God is girding Himself to

this work as He did in the day of our great deliverance. Now will He put forth His glorious power in fulfilment of His ancient oath and promise." Thus this noble leader stirs up the faith and zeal of his people and secures their vigorous co-operation.

But this general command to Israel is accompanied by a special reminder to the two-and-a-half tribes whose possessions lay east of Jordan. Self-interest might have made the bulk of the people eager to cross the watery barrier, but it might also have inclined these tribes to stay where they were, hence the necessity for this special exhortation. From the way in which he addresses them, we get a glimpse of Joshua's ideas of discipline. He was a leader who knew his own duties well and performed them faithfully. He also knew the duties of those under him, and looked diligently after their performance. He did not rule with a slack hand, he knew what was due to himself and the cause he had at heart; therefore his reminder takes the form of a demand for the services of the trans-Jordanic tribes. In making this demand he declares their duty plainly, supports it with reasons, and enforces it with firmness. The demand he made was authoritative. It was founded on a past transaction to which they had agreed. He showed that this was nothing more than the carrying out of an arrangement previously made. From this it would not be lawful to deviate, for the commandment of Moses in regard to this, was the word of the Lord.

This demand was also reasonable. Joshua did not ask for all the warriors of these tribes. Many of them would be required to stay at home with the women and children, the flocks and herds. To have taken all

would have been unreasonable. It would also have been foolish, for it would have left his rear open to attack ; whereas this conquered territory in possession of his friends, gave him a good base of operations. By a comparison of Joshua iv. 13 with Numbers xxvi. 7, and xviii. 34, it seems that, in round numbers, 40,000 of the warriors of these tribes went in with Joshua and twice as many stayed at home. But it is worthy of notice that the 40,000 are picked men. Joshua took the flower of their fighting men—"All the mighty men of valour." The raw lads and the worn-out soldiers, as well as the inferior men, may stay at home to do garrison duty, the veterans must march with him. Surely this is sensible. It is always wise to put the best men to the most difficult work.

In fulfilling this commission of the true Joshua, has the Church always acted with equal wisdom and fidelity ? It did so in the purest and palmiest days of missionary effort, when, filled with the spirit of wisdom and love and power, it broke forth on the right and left and speedily overran the known world. Now it seems as if all the mighty men of valour should stay at home to nurse the feeble spark of the Church's vitality, while the striplings go to the wars. Yea, are there not some who instead of evangelizing among the heathen, expend all their energy in proselytising among Christians ? Thank God such sentiments do not altogether prevail ; such action is far from universal, yet how often has it been thought and said, "Any one will do for a missionary." Surely it is high time to cast away the last rags of such low thoughts. We need the very best men our churches and colleges can produce, to go to these high places of the field, and unfurl the standard of the

Cross. And truly in these last days many mighty men of valour, men of apostolic mould and mettle, have dedicated themselves to this work, and there is we believe a solemn responsibility resting on every one whom God has called to the ministry of the word, to face this question, "Has God any work for me in the vast field of Heathendom?" And we have also to remember that except there are clear and overwhelming reasons for staying where we are, the call of the Saviour is to "Go" into all the world, not "Send." This solemn call can never be settled in an easy off-hand manner. It must be settled by each, in the presence and under the authority of that Saviour who has appointed us a part in this ministry; and of one thing we are confident, and that is, that the sentiment of the Church universal requires correction in regard to this work, it must be corrected if anything great is to be done. Never till the Church clearly sees and heartily acknowledges that this is the end for which it exists, the reason why all things continue as they are, will this work be done in a worthy manner.

The demand made by Joshua on the pastoral tribes was also equitable. "You have rest," he might have said, "Your brethren have not. You got rest through their help, therefore you are bound to help them to the same blessing. The command of Moses in regard to this was acquiesced in by you, therefore truth and honour require its faithful carrying out." Moreover what an unseemly picture it would have presented, to have seen part of the nation fighting hard, while their brethren sat still and looked on in ignoble ease. And how shortsighted would this policy of idleness have been. Only by the speedy and thorough con-

quest of all the land could the heritage of any tribe be kept in pleasant and unquestioned possession. To march with Joshua was the wisest, as well as the most seemly thing these tribes could do.

Surely the same arguments could be urged with equal force as incentives to the grand work of world-wide Christian testimony. We are called to this work by the highest authority. This must always be the starting-point. We are not at liberty to choose in this matter. This is first of all a question of obedience or disobedience to the command of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Some men talk as if home claims excluded these of the wide field of the world. "We have enough heathens at home, and it will be time enough to go abroad when they are evangelised," say some. Suppose the men of Reuben or Gad had argued in the same way : "We have enough to do at home in looking after our own interests and defending our own inheritances from the enemies that lie to the east and north." Would not that have been disobedience, yea rebellion, against God's ordinance ? Even so, abstinence from the work of evangelising the world is nothing short of rebellion.

The demands made upon us in regard to the work of the Lord in our days are as reasonable as the demand made on the eastern tribes. No individual or church is expected to do above what they are able. This may be done, has sometimes been done, and the result has been scandalous. Such action is not faith but folly. The first missionary work which some men have to do is to pay their debts ; but that done, this must not be left undone.

This command to preach the Gospel laid on us, is

both equitable and seemly. We have received the Gospel ; should we not give it ? Where would we have been, if those in times past had acted on the non-aggressive principle, and waited for the perfect evangelisation of their neighbours, before passing forth to our forefathers ? We should remember the words of the lepers when they discovered the deserted camp of their enemies : " We do not well. This is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace." Silence is sometimes a great sin. Why is it that God still keeps the world agoing ? Why does He not hasten the end ? Is it because He has forgotten His word of promise ? Nay. Is it that we may have an opportunity to make and to spend a fortune ? Nay. It is that the knowledge of His love and great salvation may be spread through all lands. Christ's interest in this work never flags. He can never become idle or indifferent ; and the more our hearts are moved to an interest in this work the healthier and purer and happier will our own spiritual life become ; whereas if we do not carry out this work heartily, our character will dwindle into a shrivelled worldliness or swell into an inflated wordiness. Well may we imitate the unflagging energy, the wise discretion, the unquestioning faith, the unfaltering courage, and the high hope of Joshua, as we push the conquest of the Cross from pole to pole.

THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE WAS as noble in its way as that of their leader. There is a holy rivalry between Israel and Joshua. They stir each other up to the great work that has to be done. The outstanding feature in the response of the people is its enthusiasm. It is plain from their response that they are heart and soul in the work before them, that they are only waiting

for their leader's command, to march forth a band of heroes. To say that their reply to Joshua was hearty would be to do them injustice ; it was enthusiastic. Every soul in the camp was stirred to its utmost depth. This is plain from the readiness with which they replied. They did not hang back, waiting for each other to speak out. Much less did they hunt up excuses why they should not march. They did not modify or minimise their responsibilities. They were as eager to follow Joshua, as Joshua was to follow Jehovah.

This enthusiasm was also manifested by their cheerfulness. The man who has no heart in his work is apt to grumble at everything that gives him trouble. Murmuring is the chronic disease of the half-hearted, dejection is their painful portion. How the fathers of this race were afflicted by it ! Can we not imagine the panic into which such a command would have thrown them ? Their souls never seemed able to shake off the effects of the spiritual miasma of the mud of Nile. The ague there received, seemed, with a few exceptions, to settle in their very bones, and their experience too often alternated between shivering fits of discontented depression and burning fits of spasmodic presumption. This spiritual ague seemed to plague them all their lives and rob them of all elasticity and vigour. Happily the disease was not hereditary, as this robust and healthy enthusiasm manifested. These men had not only promised to put their hands to this work, but also made it plain that they felt it their highest privilege to be able to do so.

Oh for such holy enthusiasm in the work of the Lord in these days ! The best of us are but half-hearted

at the best, and some, alas ! seem utterly unable to get up the least spark of enthusiasm for holy things. Some souls are never fired with the glory and greatness of God's saving work. They have all the coldness of an icicle without any of its sparkle. If they ever exhibit any traces of enthusiasm, it is in furnishing excuses for idleness, certainly not in sharpening their swords and falling into the ranks of God's fighting men. Spiritually they are akin to that race whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and they are afflicted with the same disease. It has a new name in modern days, for it is called the Englishman's privilege of grumbling ; but it is nothing less than the old Jewish disease of murmuring. Let us beware lest a promise being left us of entering into God's rest any of us should seem to come short of it. How loth are not a few to march at God's command into the high places of the spiritual battle-field. To make them rise from their bed of sloth is no easy task ; and when, by dint of shouting and shaking, they are partially aroused, they yawn so miserably, they look so dismal, they heave such doleful sighs, that you almost feel sorry you have disturbed them. Then every little duty is a burden and pain. They are ready to give up at the least discouragement ; to turn and run at the first shot fired. How often have they to be beaten back to their places in the ranks, by the broad side of the officer's blades ! The service of the Lord is to them a dreary task ; and when they do give up a morsel of their time or a mite of their substance, it is done with such a grudge ; or they impress upon you, so emphatically and volubly, a sense of the great favour they are conferring upon you, that you feel it a triumph of

grace that you do not spurn their gifts and turn from them in disgust. Oh for the holy enthusiasm manifested by Israel here! If we profess to be Christians, if we profess to do God's work, if we profess to respond to the call of the true Joshua, let us do it, not like galley slaves, but like God's freemen; let us do it as those who think His service our highest honour.

Joshua's followers were also unreserved in acknowledging their allegiance. They kept nothing back and made no reservation. They asked no questions and imposed no conditions. Nothing could be more satisfactory or thorough-going than their words, "All that thou commandest us we will do. Whithersoever thou sendest us we will go." However uncongenial the task, however hazardous the enterprise, however difficult the errand, however dangerous the expedition, you will be our law in all things. Is obedience, prompt and unquestioning, the first duty of a soldier, the promise of good success? See how splendidly it was possessed by these Israelites. They declare that it is not for them to make reply, not for them to reason why; but simply, constantly, to do all that was commanded them.

And if such glorious allegiance was due to Joshua, much more is it due to our Great Captain of Salvation, Jesus Christ. Whatsoever He commands in His Word we should do. Wheresoever He sends us in His Providence we should go. Every loyal heart speaks to Him as Israel spoke to Joshua, without reservation or exception. To aim at anything short of absolute and constant obedience is unchristian.

The response of the people was also humble, sincere earnest, and hopeful. A slight transformation in the

opening words of v. 17 makes their meaning more clear. It should read thus : "According to all in which we hearkened to Moses so will we hearken unto thee." They do not here brag of their obedience to Moses. Though better than their fathers, they had nothing to boast of, and conscious of their own weakness they merely said, "We will try to make our best obedience to Moses, the model of our obedience to you." And there is good hope that they will succeed in carrying out this promise, for it is plain that they make it in a prayerful spirit, inasmuch as they follow it up by saying, "Only the Lord be with thee as He was with Moses." This is no impertinent limitation, qualifying their full allegiance as already given ; but an earnest prayer that Joshua might constantly enjoy the Divine guidance, protection, and blessing vouchsafed to Moses. It is as if they said : "Our chief matter of anxiety is, that the Lord be with thee ; then all will be well." Thus it is plain that they are taught of the Spirit to know the magnitude of the work, and the source of all strength to perform it. Surely this is a good prayer from the lips of any people, for those who are over them in the Lord—"The Lord thy God be with thee."

Then they finish their response by words vehement and uncompromising. "Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, let him be put to death." What more could a leader desire than such a spontaneous manifestation of fidelity ? How must this declaration have strengthened Joshua's heart, showing so clearly as it did, that his appointment to the leadership by Jehovah was so heartily ratified by all the people. With what strength and authority

did it invest him ! What efficiency in the prosecution of the work did it promise ! All his proposals, directions, and commands would be supported by their unanimous approval. The last words of this brave response are words of hope and good cheer ; heartily they echo back the exhortation of Jehovah, "Only be strong and of a good courage." Surely such an admirable address from the people whom he lived to serve was fitted to give Joshua greater strength, deeper confidence, and higher courage. Happy leader with such a people ! Happy people with such a leader !

VI.

A PARENTHESIS OF GRACE.

JOSHUA II.

“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”—HEB. xi. 31.

THE second chapter of Joshua reveals in a very clear light the capacity of Joshua as a general. Though he has received such large promises and unconditional assurances of Divine help; though human co-operation has been pledged in a way that left nothing to be desired; he does not go forward carelessly and in the dark. He acts as any other wise leader would do in like circumstances; he acts as if everything depended on his own vigilance and skill. Accordingly he sent out two spies to make a reconnaissance in the land. Their special object was to gather all important information attainable concerning Jericho; its position, fortifications, the number of its soldiers and inhabitants, the state of public opinion in reference to Israel, etc. If Joshua did not dispense with the results of his own skill and prudence in prosecuting the conquest of Canaan, surely it is well for us to remember that Divine promises are never given to do away with the exercise of natural wisdom and foresight. To expect a given end without using appropriate means is presumption, not faith. Carelessness is not Christianity. Impru-

dence is not piety. God's promises are not like easy chairs, in which we are to ensconce ourselves, and expect great things to turn up ; they are rather like snow shoes, enabling us to traverse places otherwise impassable.

And this mission of the spies shows the mettle of the men of Israel as well as the ability of Joshua. These two scouts are very different from the men sent by Moses on a similar errand. The task set them was exceedingly dangerous, yet they showed no fear, they never thought of flinching. It was very difficult, yet they display great dexterity in accomplishing it, and that rare mingling of audacity and caution, coolness and skill, so necessary in men engaged in such a hazardous enterprise. Their report also breathes manly courage and confidence in every syllable ; its tone reminds us of Joshua himself and his old companion Caleb in former days, and must have rejoiced the heart of this great warrior exceedingly.

But while these things are brought out very clearly in the narrative, still this chapter is specially noteworthy for the glorious revelation it makes of the unspeakable goodness of God. It shows us in the most touching manner how He delights in mercy, and that judgment is always His strange work. If there had been ten righteous in Sodom, God would have spared that unclean city. Had there been ten righteous in Jericho it also would have escaped. There was within its walls one woman, a great sinner, groping after God ; and a whole chapter must be devoted to the story of her deliverance, to the unfolding of the triumph of God's grace over judgment. Though all things are ready ; though the sword of Justice is raised to smite the awful blow ; God's arm must be arrested till that

one anxious soul is safe. God could do nothing to Sodom till Lot escaped ; He will do nothing to Jericho till Rahab's safety is ensured. Surely there is encouragement here to the chief of sinners : in prospect of the most awful judgment, God is ready to save, to save to the very uttermost ; this is the grand consoling lesson of this chapter—this glorious parenthesis of grace.

Faith in the human heart is a Divine work and a Divine wonder. Jesus wondered when He beheld the witness of it in the message of the Centurion, and in the cry of the Syro-Phoenician, and sometimes it occurs among circumstances so strange and unlikely, as to compel the wonder even of our hard hearts and dull minds. The faith of Rahab is of this class—strange, unaccountable on merely natural grounds. That this plant of heavenly renown should take root and spring up in such uncongenial soil is what we do not naturally look for. Her faith reminds us of a tree we have seen in the Highlands of Scotland. At the bottom of a wild glen stood a huge boulder, which towered high above those which had toppled with it from the mountain side, and it had a strange crown. On its summit, as if rising out of the rock, grew a young tree—green, vigorous, and healthy. From its peculiar position, it attracted the notice of every passer-by ; it was the only tree for miles around, and there, in that wilderness, and on that rock, it grew, planted as it were by the finger of God. Even so the faith of Rahab is a great wonder, a tree of Paradise, planted by the hand of God, in the midst of a wilderness of moral and spiritual desolation.

“**BY FAITH THE HARLOT RAHAB PERISHED NOT WITH THEM THAT BELIEVED NOT, WHEN SHE HAD RECEIVED THE SPIES WITH PEACE**” (Heb. xi. 31).

Let us look at Rahab's faith, and meditate on a few of its phases.

Consider the HINDRANCES of her faith. These were numerous and mighty, and arose both from herself and from others—from her natural friends and from her natural enemies. There were hindrances which arose from *herself*. She was the *harlot* Rahab. Her character was exceptionally evil. She belonged to a class than whom they are none more hardened, inaccessible, and hopeless. Indulgence in such courses as characterize the class of which she was one, of necessity petrifies the feeling, sears the conscience, and makes the heart as hard as the nether millstone. None are more inaccessible to good influences ; cut off from all communication with the respectable ; shut up to the companionship of the outwardly and defiantly profigate ; they must wax worse and worse, getting further from the reach of all good. Hence there is no class whose case is more hopeless. Lust is like the unclean spirit, which, when it takes possession of the heart, brings with it seven spirits more wicked than itself. When impurity opens the door, no other sin can be barred out. Cruelty, hatred, deceit, murder itself, are the vile progeny of lust. Rahab belonged to this class, whose whole existence is a flagrant sin. Moreover she had found her calling profitable, and therefore, naturally speaking, would be the more firmly wedded to her evil ways. She was not like most of her sisters, who have found the street a stony-hearted step-mother, soured by adversity. She was a householder in Jericho, seemingly well to do, and the whole moral tone around her being so terribly deteriorated, she had trod the paths of vice at their most flowery season. Thus she

had her conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ; by nature, a child of wrath. Moreover, Israel is coming to Jericho, for the purpose of executing the Divine vengeance on the very evils of which she is guilty. The cry of the Canaanites has ascended to heaven ; in long-suffering patience God has waited till now, but at last, He has sent forth His hosts to consume them utterly. How much then was there, in herself, to keep Rahab from trust in Jehovah ! Nothing is rarer than the turning of such from the error of their ways. None find it so hard to cease to do evil, to learn to do well.

There were also hindrances to Rahab's faith arising from *her natural friends*. The example of all her neighbours would encourage her in a path of unbelief. Her faith would make her an oddity in Jericho. True they had all heard of the advance of Israel, they had all heard of the success of Israel. Rumours had long since reached their ears of the Plagues of Egypt ; of the wondrous crossing of the Red Sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh and the chivalry of Egypt ; of the glorious marching through the wilderness, under the beckoning banner that fired the firmament by night, and shaded the sands by day ; of the fight with Amalek, and the destruction of Sihon and Og. And at the recital of these great and terrible deeds their hearts for a while had failed them, but soon they plucked up courage, they remembered how the Amalekites had smote Israel at Kadesh, and that the victory seemed so decisive that the invaders shrank back into the wilderness for forty years. May not a like fate await them now ? What could a nation of slaves do against their trained warriors ? How could Israel hope to succeed

in a contest with those who were fighting for their fatherland, who occupied all the strong fortresses within its borders, and who were acquainted, from childhood, with every inch of the ground? Moreover, Israel's great leader, Moses, has just died; who knows that his untried successor will be fit for the post? Thus, though death and destruction are near; though a sword is sharpened for a sore slaughter; though the testimony of God's mighty wonders is clear and emphatic; their hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and they believe not; their fears are superficial, carnal, transient; therefore they occupy themselves with their usual concerns, heedless of the danger approaching; they buy, they sell, they plant, they build, they marry, they give in marriage, as if no dark night of judgment were near. Why will they not believe that judgment is near? Because they do not believe that judgment is deserved. Is it not so now? Judgment is surely and swiftly approaching. "His damnation slumbereth not." "A sword, a sword is sharpened and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter: it is furbished that it may glitter. . . . It is the rod of My Son, it despiseth every tree." Why will not men believe that it is near? Because they do not believe that it is deserved. If men only knew their sin in some true measure, realized the awful cry for vengeance that is continually ascending to the throne of the Highest, they would have no difficulty as to the coming judgment. It is not through the head, from the testimony of aught outward, however clear and emphatic its voice, but through the conscience and the heart that man is brought to belief. Thus, everything in the surroundings of Rahab tended to keep her under the

dominion of unbelief; the whole tide of public opinion was against her faith. How strange then that she should believe; how evidently her faith was the work of God.

There were hindrances to her faith arising from *her natural enemies*. Israel, the people of Jehovah, were arrayed against her and her people, and were even now marching onward to their destruction. She and her fellow citizens had still the tradition of that terrible visitation which overtook the cities of the plain, and as with fire and brimstone Jehovah had destroyed these wicked cities, so now with the sword of Israel He is to cut down those Canaanites whose cup of iniquity is full. With the besom of destruction He is to sweep them from the land. The mission of Israel is not one of mercy, but of judgment. Their feet are not beautiful upon the mountains, bringing good tidings of peace. They bring no gospel to the Canaanites, but war, disaster, and death are in their invincible path. How black was the outlook for Rahab. The God of Israel had manifested Himself in terrible acts. How was it that she was able to pass from His judgments back to His mercy? What inclined her to hope? The revelation which she had of God was such as we deem dark and forbidding—repellent rather than attractive. Why was she led to put her trust in Him? She knew only that He overthrew Pharaoh and his host; that He led His people through the wilderness; that He smote great kings, and slew famous kings—Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan; yet, mysteriously, divinely taught, she was able to couple with these terrible deeds of might the consolation of the grand chorus, “His mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm

cxxxvi.). We cannot tell how faith was kindled in her heart, we only know that it burned brightly there ; but surely Rahab, who believed in the face of all these dark and terrible revelations of Jehovah, will rise up in judgment against you who will not believe, though the message that is brought to you is one of unmixed mercy and of boundless love. Israel went to Canaan proclaiming the day of vengeance, Jesus came to earth proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord. The messengers of the Cross are preachers of glad tidings of great joy, are ambassadors of God, as if Christ did beseech you to be reconciled to God. Surely if the goodness and love of God do not bring you to repentance ; surely if His long-suffering does not lead you to faith, Rahab, who had no such revelation, yet believed, will stand up to condemn you.

Consider THE OPPORTUNITY of her faith. Faith always finds, or rather God always gives to faith, an opportunity for its manifestation. Everything was ready for the invasion of Canaan by Israel. The forty years' march and training in the wilderness were completed. The severe discipline of those dreary years, so essential to their knowledge of themselves, and of Jehovah, of their relationship to Him, and of their hope in His promises, was at last over. Moses had received the command, "Come up higher." Joshua had been installed in his place, as leader of the people. Why then does Israel linger ? Is this not a waste of time, impolitic and unmeaning ? Is the Lord slack concerning His promises ? By no means, but He is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish. As in the day of Sodom's doom, the Lord delayed till righteous Lot had escaped to Zoar, saying, "I cannot

do anything till thou be come thither," so, now, if there is a single soul in Jericho, groping after Him in the darkness of vice and heathenism, He will delay the march of His destroying hosts, to give that soul the opportunity which it requires, and for which it longs. He can do nothing in judgment till that one soul in the doomed city is brought into a place of safety. Thus this pause in the Divine and just act of judgment; this parenthesis of grace; this long-suffering of God, is salvation.

The last words which the disciples heard, on Olivet, from the lips of the angels, as they stood gazing into heaven, were these: "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." And we know that when He returns it will be as a second Joshua, "In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God; and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 8). As He came, the Lamb of God, proclaiming "The acceptable year of the Lord," so shall He come the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, fulfilling "The day of vengeance of our God." In the meanwhile, between His first and second appearances, there is an interval of grace, prolonged through the long-suffering of God. Short was the delay granted to the doomed Jericho. How long has this day of grace lasted for us citizens of a doomed world, doubly condemned, by our own sin and the despised blood of the Lamb? Are there no signs of that coming day of wrath? Do men treat it as a horrid dream; the nightmare of superstitious souls? It is according to the word that was written long ago, "There shall come in the last days, scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where

is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. . . . But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day ; the Lord is not slack concerning His promises, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to usward, **NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH, BUT THAT ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE.**" Friend, avail yourself, like Rahab, of this precious pause. Only one chance was given her, and she availed herself of it. How many opportunities have you allowed to slip by ? Surely the readiness of this soul to embrace the first opportunity ought to fill you with shame, and confusion of face. She embraced this one opportunity, the first and the last she ever had. You now have another opportunity of deciding for eternity ; it is not the first ; but can you assure me it will not be the last ? Oh ! then, by your past neglect ; by this present presentation ; by future uncertainty as to grace, and certainty as to judgment ; embrace Jesus Christ *now*, freely offered to you in the Gospel.

Consider THE OPERATION of her faith. Rahab showed her faith by her works. Many people, now-a-days, say they have faith, and we do not believe them. Why? Because we do not see, in their works, the fruits of faith. We cannot see your faith, but we can see your works, and if your works do not correspond with the fruits of faith ; if you are not living soberly, righteously, and godly ; you may talk for a century about having faith, but we will not believe you, for the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle James, tells us that "Faith without works is dead." It was not so in the

case of Rahab. Her faith manifested itself in her deeds; it was a faith which wrought by love. She received the spies in peace—that is to say, with friendliness. She might have betrayed them to their enemies, who were eagerly desirous of laying hands on them and killing them; but she shielded them from danger; hiding them at her own hazard, under the stalks of flax drying on her housetop. We cannot, and do not, defend the deliberate falsehood, by which she misled her fellow citizens, in search of the spies; but we must remember that her whole training, from childhood, had been in lies, and that this was a sudden emergency. She was no well-instructed saint, walking under the light of God's countenance, but a great sinner groping after Him. Hence those who find objections to the sacred narrative, because it truly describes the whole of Rahab's conduct, are merely repeating the sneer of the Pharisees, "This man receiveth sinners." There is sufficient in her conduct to manifest a heart truly sincere and anxiously solicitous for the welfare of God's people, willing to risk her own life to save theirs. And it is this point, this genuine fruit of faith, which the Holy Ghost singles out for recognition, passing over all the rest. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." It is her friendly *reception* of the spies and all that this implied which is the manifest fruit of her faith.

Turn now to THE CONFESSION of her faith. He that believes with the heart confesses with the mouth. All the believing add to their faith virtue, boldness in confessing the truth; all are witnesses. To the spies Rahab said, "I know that the Lord hath given you the

land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you . . . for the Lord your God He is God in Heaven above, and in earth beneath." She speaks with all the certainty of faith ; the accent of conviction is heard in every syllable. She does not say, "I think," "I suppose," "I fear," but "I know." She believes as firmly in the promises of God as any in Israel. She knows that the words given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the title-deeds of her land ; and she dare not, she would not dispute the claim. She knows that He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; that "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel ; for the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. xxxii. 8-10). And as she believes in the promises of God, so she believes in the God of the promises. How clear and unmistakable is her confession of the name of Jehovah ; how high, and exalted, and spiritual ; how wonderful, in the mouth of one trained, from infancy, to worship stocks and stones ; trained to think that the power of the different deities was local and circumscribed,—"The Lord your God, He is God in Heaven above, and in earth beneath." There is, in this good confession, a casting behind her of all those false gods the deluded of Satan worship, a separation in spirit from her own idolatrous people and union with the Israel of God.

Next let us ponder THE TRIAL of her faith. Faith is always tested, that it may be manifested as Divine.

The spies left with Rahab a strange pledge for the fulfilment of their promise of safety to her and her house—only a scarlet cord, which she was strictly enjoined to bind in her window, when Israel came into the land. When the hosts of Israel encamped before Jericho, when she saw the strange and silent procession marching round the walls, day after day, did she wonder what the scarlet cord could have to do with her safety? We do not know; but, faithful to the command, she bound the cord upon the window. And in reality all depended upon it. Only under that cord of scarlet was there safety in Jericho, every other house was doomed. So was it in the night of Egypt's doom. Those homes alone were safe whose lintel and door-posts revealed the same crimson hue, the emblem of death. As the destroying angel durst not enter the blood-besprinkled dwelling, so judgment could not overtake the souls that sheltered beneath the scarlet cord. And both the scarlet cord of Jericho and the scarlet lintel of Egypt speak of the blood of Jesus, by which alone the sinner is sheltered from a greater judgment than that which swept over Egypt or Jericho. We may not see the relation between the death of Jesus and our salvation; we may not be able to understand how the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; but, none the less, let us depend upon it, for there is shelter only under the blood. Had Rahab sought to add anything to the instructions of the spies; had she consulted her own ideas as to the best means of ensuring her safety; she would have manifested her folly, and would have miserably failed. So, trust in any other means than those which God has provided; trust in anything but the blood of the Lamb, is a

manifestation of folly and a sure cause of failure. As in Jericho there was only one place of safety from the coming judgment, under the shelter of the scarlet cord ; so in this doomed world there is only one place of safety, under the shelter of the blood, at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and the truly quickened soul trusts in nothing else.

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress ;
Mid flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who ought to my charge can lay ?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.”

Consider also THE SOLICITUDE of her faith. She was anxious not only about her own safety, but about that of those who were dear to her. She was not selfishly absorbed in looking after her own welfare, content if she herself escaped ; but, with true affection, arranged for the rescue of her relatives. Listen to her pleading with the spies, “Now, therefore, I pray you swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token, and that ye will save alive my father and my mother, and my brethren and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.” Her request was granted ; and her next step was to persuade the members of her father’s house to avail themselves of the refuge provided—to shelter themselves under the true token she had received. Her endeavours to work their deliverance were not thwarted by their perversity. She was not like Lot,

at a similar crisis, met with mockery and scorn. All her kin were persuaded that the danger was real, and that the shelter was sufficient; therefore, they gladly listened to her entreaties, and availed themselves of the refuge.

The work of Rahab, in bringing in others, is similar to that of every saved soul. After we ourselves are saved, we are not to rest content; we are not to sit down in idleness and ease, because all is well with us for ever. We are to bear on our hearts those who are still exposed to the Divine judgment; we are to be up and doing, instant in season and out of season, if by any means we may save some. It is the natural instinct of all saved souls, thus to be anxiously solicitous for the eternal welfare of others; and the more fully we believe and rejoice in salvation through God's grace, the more strenuously do we labour to bring in others. And surely the more closely they are connected with us by natural bonds, the more anxious should we be for them to be bound up with us in the same bundle of life. As with Rahab, those of our father's house should be our first care.

Lastly, consider THE REWARD of her faith. When the dread day of Jericho's judgment came, what a joy must it have been to Rahab to know that all dear to her were safe. When the shouts of God's host rang from earth to sky, and the solid walls tottered and fell, when the armed Israelites rushed in to do their awful work—destroying utterly all that was in the city, “Both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and ass;” when the shrieks of agony were heard above the shouts of triumph, and all the streets ran blood, oh! who can tell the deep thankfulness of

Rahab's heart, as she looked around on all dear to her—safe ! safe within the refuge—the only living in that place of death ? What a reward already for her faith ! what a recompense for all her endeavours !

We can imagine the joy that must have filled Rahab's heart that day ; but who can tell the rapture of those who have saved a soul from eternal death, and covered a multitude of sins. What heart can conceive the joy of the preacher or the teacher, of the parent or the child, when—the trials and vicissitudes of time all past and gone—they see around them in heaven, safe, safe for ever, those whom they had loved on earth, those whom they had led to the feet of the Saviour. Surely it will double their eternal happiness. As it is put into the lips of Rutherford :—

“ Oh ! if one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God's right hand,
My Heaven will be two Heavens,
In Immanuel's land.”

Surely such a glorious reward, such a monument of everlasting renown, is worth labouring for, worth living for, worth dying for, “ They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever ” (Dan. xii. 3).

But, turning again to the case before us, why did the multitudes in Jericho thus perish without pity ? Was it because the cup of their iniquity was full ? Yes ! truly, for they had fearfully corrupted their ways. But, while many sins characterized the Canaanites, the Holy Ghost selects *one sin*, as emphatically that which caused their destruction. Which sin ? *Unbelief*. That which distinguished Rahab from the rest was not

superior morality, higher intelligence, a more exemplary life, a better natural disposition, but FAITH IN GOD. She believed ; they believed not. Because she believed, she was saved ; because they believed not, they perished : "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not." Even so, many sins may characterize you, and each one is like a millstone round your neck, fitted to drag you down to endless destruction, but your great, culminating, condemning sin is unbelief. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16).

But Rahab was not only rescued from the judgment of Jericho, she was also received into the number of God's people. A place was provided for her in God's house, and there she received a fuller knowledge of God's nature and will, and man's duty and responsibility. She was instructed in all God's words, and we cannot doubt sought diligently to walk in all His ways. The misconceptions, distortions, and doubts, necessary concomitants of heathen training, gave way more and more before the light of divine revelation. Quickly she would learn the lesson of redemption, of which her own salvation was such a striking picture ; eagerly would she embrace the hopes of Israel, and long for that prophet whom the Lord was to raise up, like unto Moses. And to her was granted, highest reward of all, the great honour of becoming a living link in that chain of descent which brought salvation to a ruined world. She became an ancestor of the Messiah ; her name is enrolled by Matthew in the genealogy of Jesus. Thus, this alien from the commonwealth of Israel, this stranger from the covenant of promise, this great

sinner of Jericho became a mother in Israel, of whom, as pertaining to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.

Even so, the sinner who believes in Jesus is not only saved from wrath to come, but is received into the Church—the house of the living God, there to be instructed more fully in the ways of God ; there to learn all the lessons that the grace of God can teach ; to deny ungodliness and worldly lust ; to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Thus, there is no reason why the vilest slave of Satan may not become an intelligent and highly honoured saint, a bright gem in the crown of Jesus, when He comes to be admired of all that love Him. God grant that it may be so with all who read these words. May we have Rahab's faith, and thus partake of Rahab's high reward. Amen.

VII.

JORDAN DRIVEN BACK.

JOSHUA III.

“ What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest ? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back ? ”—PSALM cxiv. 5.

“ **W**HAT ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest ? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back ? ” Here the Psalmist mentions two miracles in the same breath, puts them over against each other as astounding manifestations of Divine might and glorious manifestations of Divine grace, mysteries arresting the attention, themes calling for praise. The first of these opened up a way for Israel out of the house of bondage ; the other, into the land of promise. The one speaks of complete escape from the prison of their great oppressor ; the other of triumphal entry into the heritage of their Saviour God. Of this we now speak.

CONSIDER THE ENDS ATTAINED BY THIS GREAT WONDER. We may rest assured that it was for good and sufficient reasons that God wrought this great miracle. He does not do His mighty works for trifling ends ; there is always a special purpose in such acts. It cannot be said that there was such a pressing necessity for the performance of this wonder, as there was for that at the Red Sea. Then Israel had to go forward or perish ; here there was no absolute necessity for crossing the Jordan at all. They could have entered the land by

some other route. And even if this were the best route that could be chosen, there was no necessity for them to cross precisely at that time, or exactly at that place. This was only one of several ways of entrance that might have been chosen; therefore this, the most unlikely of all, must have been chosen for special purposes. Nor are these difficult to find. By this wonderful entrance into the land Joshua was greatly honoured. "This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses so I will be with thee." It was a wonder wrought by Jehovah to establish the authority of Joshua. It was a fulfilling of the promise He had made, to be with him as he had been with Moses. It was an emphatic endorsement of the people's enthusiastic response. It was His own seal and signature placed upon Joshua's commission. Moses was greatly honoured by the passage of the Red Sea. It showed that he was in God's secret when he spoke to the children of Israel to go forward. In like manner Joshua was now magnified in the eyes of all the people. Surely this was essential to united and effective action on the part of those he led. If men have no deep confidence in their commander, they cannot follow cheerfully, they cannot work heartily. Therefore, when God calls to office, He endows with all needful honour; and not only does He bestow it at the beginning, He also maintains it so long as He has work for His servants to do. This was no evanescent respect, reigning in the hearts of the people for a few days, till some new trouble obliterated the remembrance of the old wonder. Notwithstanding the fickleness of the human heart, and its constant tendency to forget past services

and run after new favourites, that one wonder established Joshua's position in Israel, till the day of his death. The impression made by it on the people was so deep, that from that day "they feared him as they feared Moses all the days of his life."

Surely such a record as this should teach every servant of God to leave his honour in God's keeping. His one aim should ever be to honour God, knowing assuredly that that word of promise is never broken, "Them that honour Me I will honour." Yea, more than that, He will also cause others to do the same. Joshua was intent only on carrying out the Divine commission, and he had his reward. He showed the calmness of the man who knows the Divine secret and who cannot be moved. In that momentous hour of suppressed but intense excitement in view of that wonderful entrance, he gave his orders quietly and clearly. There was no hesitation in his manner, no tremor in his voice. With firmness and dignity he made the simple announcement of what was to take place. "It shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above ; and they shall stand upon an heap" (Josh. iii. 13.). The people heard and stood in awe when they saw his words fulfilled. From that hour they looked up to him with unbounded reverence and confidence ; all were eager to go wherever he led, to do whatever he commanded.

Still further, we are told that by this miracle THE DIVINE PRESENCE WAS REVEALED. "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you" (v. 10). This

wonder gave new proof of His guiding presence, and such an assurance was, in their present circumstances, peculiarly appropriate. The manna was about to cease. No longer will that sweet shower of angels' food whiten the fields around their camp from day to day. That token of God's presence and loving care they will have no more. In like manner the beckoning banner of cloud and fire is furled for ever. No longer can it lead them forward, for their rest is gained. It played an important part in the crossing of the Red Sea, when it rolled between them and their foes, an impenetrable shield. We hear nothing of it in this crossing of the Jordan. But if it has gone, Jehovah has not. His presence, though without that visible manifestation, is as real as ever. And it is as powerful; He is the living God, not dead like the idols of the Canaanites, or the ideas and abstractions of the philosopher, or the forces and atoms of the scientist. Neither is He inoperative; a worn-out energy, a decrepit force. He is acting everywhere, by all means, at all times. What a demonstration of these things was the working of this wonder. "What ailed thee, O Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" The presence of the Lord, the presence of the God of Jacob, is the only possible answer. Nothing less than that is sufficient to explain this wonder. And the force of this act cannot be evaded. This was either a miracle or nothing. It was a more marvellous act indeed than the crossing of the Red Sea. As we gaze on the heaped-up waters and the empty bed of that flooded river we must exclaim, "Happy are the people whose God is the Lord." And we are compelled to acknowledge that He is indeed with this people, making a strange path whereby His ransomed

may pass over. Surely every soul in that wide camp would exult in the glorious presence so clearly manifested ; and what could be more conducive to success ? If it has been said of a great general that his presence with the army was worth a regiment, how much more would the assurance of the Divine presence strengthen every hero in Israel to chase a thousand foes.

Again by this miracle SUCCESS WAS GUARANTEED. " And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites " (Josh. iii. 10). After such a brilliant opening of the campaign, could there be an ignominious end ? Impossible ! Such a beginning manifested that the work was pre-eminently God's, therefore it was an unfailing pledge of success. As surely and as easily as the waters of Jordan were driven back, so would all the nations that inhabit the land be defeated. He that did the greater wonder, would not fail in accomplishing the less. Could God bring Israel into Canaan with such a high hand, that they might fall before their enemies ? Nay ! but that miracle would make every Israelite feel as if all the Canaanites were at his feet. This was not the opening up of a path to destruction but the presage of assured victory. God never abandons His work half way ; He never leaves it marred or unfinished.

Grasp this assurance in regard to all the work He is now doing, whether in the heart of individuals or in the wide world. God has given us even better grounds of hope than He gave Joshua. While he had a greater miracle than Moses on which to rest his confidence, we

have the greatest miracle God has ever wrought, even the descent of His own Son into the dark flood of death, and His glorious resurrection and ascension therefrom. What was the driving back of the waters of Jordan or of the Red Sea, to this driving back of the waters of judgment that would have overwhelmed our souls? Surely the death and resurrection of Jesus are God's own guarantee that in the wide and sore war against sin and all evil, whether within or without, the victory must rest with us. After that marvellous miracle has been wrought, after that great initial difficulty has been surmounted, how insignificant are all the other difficulties to be met, either in the sanctification of the soul, or the evangelization of the world. As Israel in the strength of this wonder went from victory to victory, so the soul that knows Jesus and His resurrection can never know defeat. Hence Paul's great prayer, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." Hence also Paul's grand experience, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." Were Paul's prayer ours in deeper earnestness than it is, so would Paul's experience be, in larger measure than we have enjoyed. Why should it not be so? Perhaps when the soldiers of Israel, in after years, were marching up and down the land fighting battles, storming strongholds, driving the enemy from his lurking places, some faint hearts may have said, "This marching and counter-marching is hard work; we do not seem to be making much progress; the land is not divided yet." Could you not conceive hundreds of faithful hearts making reply, "What of that? Remember Jordan. However weary the war, our victory is sure. He who led us in so gloriously, will

not forsake us now." Even so, when the burden of Christian work presses hard upon our souls; when there is much to be done, and few to do it, and these not perhaps in the highest spirits; or when the struggle against sin within is sore, and wicked thoughts and feelings and desires, which we had long thought exterminated, come out like the Canaanites from their lurking places in our hearts,—let us not be utterly cast down; let us bring to our remembrance the triumphant passage of that terrible river—the Jordan of God's judgment against sin. Let us look back on Golgotha and Christ's empty grave and assure our hearts with the blessed argument, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?"

Among the results flowing from this wonder, not the least important was its influence on Israel's enemies. **THE CANAANITES WERE TERRORSTRUCK.** We read of its effects on them in these words: "It came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" (Josh. v. 1.). This great event, which filled the hearts of the Israelites with confidence, had just the opposite effect upon their enemies. Nothing could have dispirited them more than such an occurrence. While the miracle would have the same effect on Israel as a long series of brilliant victories, it would have the same effect on the Canaanites as a long series of disastrous defeats.

Therefore they were utterly demoralised, beaten men before they struck a blow. Before this event, we know from the testimony of Rahab that they had their misgivings, but they would scarcely acknowledge this even to themselves. The pride of their hearts made them dissemble ; and without doubt, they had comforted themselves in the fact that a swollen river lay between them and these formidable nomads. "But did not the Red Sea open up before them ?" rumour whispered in their ear. "Oh, that story must have been a great exaggeration. No one ever heard of such a thing before. There must have been a strong wind and a low tide, of which the Israelites took advantage, while the Egyptians were a little too late. Indeed the fact that they followed the Israelites looks like a proof that it must have been something of the kind, for had it been a veritable path through the sea, the Egyptian chivalry would not have been so foolhardy as to have pressed in after them." So the men of Jericho may have reasoned as they stood on the city walls and looked across the swollen river to Joshua's army. Trusting in that great barrier they felt safe. But lo ! one day the watchman reported that something was going on in the Hebrew camp. The tents were struck, and the people marched four or five miles from their old camping ground at Shittim down to the left bank of the Jordan. Here they halted, and though the warriors of Jericho watched them keenly, they could see no sign of preparation for crossing the river. To ford it at that place and at that season they knew was utterly impossible ; therefore they only wondered at the manœuvre and comforted themselves with the thought that as yet they were safe. But scarcely had they drawn a sigh of

relief, when again they saw a movement in the camp, and before they could comprehend its meaning, they saw their enemy in thousands, swarming on the nearer bank, and nothing between but the level plain. How it happened they could not imagine. It seemed as if they had wings, or that they were able to walk upon the water. Could it be that the miracle of which they had heard had been repeated on a grand scale? Could it be that the river was dried up before them as were the waters of the sea? Yes, it was even so. They could mark the waters heaped up as far as the eye could reach to the northward, while southward of the Israelites they were evidently cut off. No wonder that before such a sight their hearts melted and there was no spirit in them any more. Who could stand against a people thus favoured? When God makes bare His arm the stoutest heart becomes like wax. All refuges of lies, every false security, is felt more frail than a gossamer web.

As we stand on the banks of Jordan and gaze on this great wonder—a wonder so appalling from the walls of Jericho, so imposing from the camp of Israel—we remember that God's children in all ages have seen in this great event a type of gospel truth; a mirror reflecting the power and love of God as manifested towards His people at the beginning and end of their spiritual course on earth; a picture of the Alpha and the Omega of the Christian life below.

Canaan may be looked upon in two ways. We may see in it a picture of the present inheritance which the believer has in Christ. It is the rest of God, promised and prepared by Him for His people; and we which have believed do enter into rest, a rest in which we are

blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Or, again, we may see in Canaan a picture of our future inheritance ; of the perfect heavenly rest which is before us, the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading. Often in the language of God's children, Canaan and Heaven are synonymous terms ; and the eternal metropolis of the saints of the Most High God is the New Jerusalem.

Both of these views are legitimate and harmonious. In as far as Canaan came up to the Divine ideal it was a fulfilment of the word of promise ; in as far as it fell short of that ideal it was a prophecy of future rest. Hence the argument in Hebrews, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." The one rest points towards and leads to the other ; they can not be separated ; hence the double significance of this entering in. It speaks not only of that new birth by which we enter into the realm of grace, but also of that triumphant entry into the realm of glory for which we wait. We are already raised with Christ and seated with Him in heavenly places, yet we also wait for the glorious resurrection of the just. These two cannot be separated —"Whom He justified them He also glorified ;" hence this one event may well picture both.

Behold then, in this passage of Jordan, first of all a picture of the beginning of the Christian's earthly course. As we stand where Israel stood, on the eastern bank, we behold a fair inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey, rich with every earthly blessing, with all that heart could wish. And all the beauty and riches of Canaan are but faint shadows of the spiritual blessings which Christ has purchased by His blood and promised to those that believe. What-

ever our soul's need, He can supply it : " Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." " If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink." Thus He speaks. He can bestow upon us whatever we need of spiritual and eternal blessing—love, joy, peace, righteousness, wisdom, holiness. But as, between Israel and Canaan, Jordan rolled, a great and immovable barrier ; so between us and the goodly heritage of spiritual blessings we behold the swollen river of God's judgment against sin. How can we who are sinners enter into life and rest ? How can we reach or enjoy such blessings ? That barrier is to us insurmountable. There are no fords in this river ; and we cannot swim across it as the spies the Jordan. Neither is there any bridge above the waterflood. Once on a time, indeed, a glorious bridge of ten arches spanned its dark and dreadful current, but these are long since broken down ; the bridge of perfect obedience to God's law is utterly swept away. Never will the waters of that flood diminish ; never can they be frozen over. Never can God's hatred against sin grow less ; never can He become indifferent. There rolls the great river, and the more we gaze upon it and mark its swift current and black depths, the more hopeless does our fate become.

But look again. Behold a mighty wonder. That river is dried up and driven back. That barrier has been abolished and the empty bed lies bare. It is as if there were no river. What has abolished the barrier ? The ark of God alone. Ere Israel crossed the Jordan, the priests of God, bearing the ark, passed on before. Between them and the vanguard of Israel there was a space of a thousand yards, and whenever

their feet were dipped in the brim of the water “the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan : and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan ” (Josh. iii. 16, 17).

Thus everything depended on the ark ; and the ark which wrought this wonder was the one visible token of the presence of Jehovah now left to Israel. It is a striking emblem of the Incarnate Son, Immanuel, God with us ; for it was made of precious gold and incorruptible shittim wood ; it was the golden coffer in which was treasured the holy law ; its lid was the blood-besprinkled mercy-seat, between whose golden cherubim Jehovah dwelt in Shekinah glory. Thus it spoke of the Lamb of God, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ; having the law of God within His heart ; presenting His atoning blood to God’s holy eye ; providing a means whereby God can dwell with man in undimmed glory. By means of it, Jordan was driven back. And as the ark abolished the barrier between Israel and Canaan, so Christ has abolished death. He Himself, in His own body, has borne all the weight of the flood of God’s judgment against sin. He has finished the work of salvation, and opened up a new and living way through His own body into the land of spiritual rest. He has done this, and done it alone. Of the people there was none with Him. No

hand of man had a share in this work, even as no man in Israel drove Jordan back.

And Jesus abolished death as speedily and effectually as that flood was driven back. As it was with the priests in Jordan so was it with the Great High Priest in the waters of judgment. Whenever the soles of His feet touched the brim of the deadly flood it fled away. In the great conflict for our salvation, the old serpent could do no more than bruise His heel. Let us not forget to cherish the triumphant aspects of Christ's death. And the work was done effectually as well as speedily. While the priests bearing the ark stood in the bed of Jordan, not a trickle of water flowed past them. It was as if no Jordan was there, as if a coffer dam, far more perfect than human hands have ever built, kept the water back. Thus has Jesus borne all the weight of God's judgment against sin and restrained it for our salvation. Through His great propitiation every drop of judgment is dried up. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. To those who trust in Him, so far as safety goes, it is as if it did not exist. Not the faintest trickle of condemnation can damp their feet. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Mark also how the passage was made by Israel. As it is written, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land," so might it also be written of this twin event, "By faith they crossed the Jordan and entered into the inheritance of the Lord." They had perfect confidence in the presence of God, so gloriously manifested in the driving back of these swelling waters. Apart from faith in His willingness and power to preserve them and their little ones in the passage, they

would never have attempted it. They saw His strong right arm bared on their behalf, and without an atom of fear they put their trust therein, and walked across the river's empty bed without haste or confusion, but with the confidence of those who know whom they have believed.

As Israel entered into Canaan by faith, so must all enter into life eternal. By nought that we can do, can we gain an entrance; but trusting in Him who has made an end of sin, we pass from death to life, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. How many seek to enter in by some other way. Some think, miserable delusion! that the waters of baptism, applied to their bodies, give their souls an entrance into that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Others think that they can win a way of entrance by zealous and constant attention to every duty; by devout observance of religious ordinances; by careful conduct toward God and man; by kindness, truth, and charity; by prayers, tears, fastings, and mortification of soul and body; by doing all that in them lies. Nay, nay, it cannot be. On the ground of doing none can enter in. As Israel passed over Jordan by faith in God, even so must all pass from condemnation to acceptance, according to that word of the Gospel, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And right gloriously is all such confidence justified, whether in the case of Israel or of any sinner that believes. How safe was Israel in that passage of the great flood. No danger could threaten the feeblest in their ranks, not one of all the host could perish; and

why? The ark was there, borne on the shoulders of the priests, in the very middle of Jordan's bed. There it remained till all Israel had gone over. As long as the ark was there, that river bed was the highway of the Great King. Walking therein the ransomed of the Lord need fear no evil. For them to be in danger was for God to fail. Not till His might had vanished or His truth had failed could one drop of the heaped-up waters trickle down upon them. Oh! how safe are they who put their trust in the living God, who enter into life by faith in Christ Jesus. The way of faith is absolutely safe, for all who walk theréin. And it is as simple as it is safe. The entrance into Canaan was the simplest, the easiest, the plainest, that could be devised. A little child could cross the emptied river as well as the stoutest warrior. And the stoutest warrior had to go the same way as the little child. It was a path that suited the feeblest, and therefore a path that suited the strongest; and no one could make any mistake about it; the wayfaring man, though a fool, could not err therein.

This is a glorious picture of the simple way of life. "It is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." Had entrance into life depended on knowledge, or wisdom, or might, or riches, or blood, or anything else than faith, it might have been difficult for many to have walked therein, but being of faith, it is the simplest, easiest, plainest that could be. And all men, whatever their condition, whatever their powers, whatever their attainments, whatever their privileges, whatever their knowledge, must enter in by the same way; there is no difference.

Again, let it be noted that this way of entrance was free to all. No one was prevented from crossing. No charge was made for crossing. Whosoever would was welcome to enter in. The fact that the road lay open was an invitation for all to cross to the goodly land of rest. Even so, though the blessings of Canaan are not to be compared for a moment with the glory of God's inheritance of grace, still entrance into this heavenly rest is free. Without money, and without price, whosoever will may enter in. The way lies right before you without a barrier and with a most urgent invitation to use it. You may have wandered many a weary mile in a land dry and uninhabited. You may be footsore and utterly disheartened with your aimless marchings, up and down, round and round in sickening monotony, for surely each man walketh in a vain show ; all the more eagerly therefore should you avail yourself of this free and full entrance into a glory and a wealth of joy and rest, above all your heart has ever thought. Come then, come ; enter gladly in. This rest is for you. And to urge you to instant decision, let me remind you also, that as that flood speedily returned and rolled again from bank to bank, so your present opportunity will pass swiftly away. Had any one in Israel lingered on the further bank, he would have been cut off from the company of those who entered in. The waters of Jordan were not exhausted by the presence of the ark, they were only restrained for a time, and speedily they returned to their old channel, destroying all hope of further crossing. The barrier which that swollen river presented to any on its eastern bank is but a feeble picture of that great gulf which by-and-bye shall be

fixed between those who have availed themselves of God's salvation and those who have not. The way of entrance is now open, free to all, even to the chief of sinners ; soon it will be closed, ay, closed for ever, for it is not now open because God's judgment against sin or hatred of it is exhausted, but only because for a little while His wrath is restrained and His grace reigns. As the ark then lingered in Jordan's depths till all Israel passed over ; so His longsuffering now waits till all God's ransomed host enter into rest ; and this longsuffering of God is salvation to a world of sinners. But when this great work has been accomplished, when all the ransomed Church of God are saved to sin no more, then that awful river will roll down its now empty bed ; and woe to those whom its dread waters will cut off from the fair fields of Paradise. In that hour "many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." With bitter cries and unavailing tears, with anguish of soul unspeakable, an entrance will be sought, but never found. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Then the Master of the house, having shut the door, will say, "Too late ! too late ! Ye cannot enter now."

But we cannot conclude our consideration of this great event without pointing out its resemblance to that abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom, ministered to all those who with all diligence add to their faith, courage, knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love. These are they who have been redeemed from the Egypt of Satan's bondage, who are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, looking for that heavenly inheritance which God the Father has promised, and which God the Son prepares. But as

they turn their eyes towards the goal of all their hopes, sometimes their hearts are troubled. They wonder how they will be able to enter in. Perchance they shudder and are dismayed as they gaze on the cold sullen flood of death rolling between them and that land. They linger in imagination, shivering on the brink, and fear to launch away. Behold here a picture of God's grace and power ; gaze on this wonder till all fear flies away. The grace that led Israel through the wilderness for forty years ; the grace that sustained their lives amid its barren sands ; the grace that gave them bread from heaven and water from the flinty rock, did it fail them at the end of the journey ? Nay ! Nay. The same power and love that had fed them with manna, and canopied them with cloud and flame, divided the waters of Jordan and gave them abundant entrance. This God remains our God for ever. His grace can never fail us. For how many years has it been ministering to all our necessities ! He called us by His grace when we were far from Him. He quickened us by His grace when we were dead in trespasses and sins. He justified us by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. By His grace He has kept us from being overcome of temptation and overwhelmed of sorrow. By His grace He has led us hitherto. Will it, can it, fail us at the end ? Surely He who has been able to supply us with grace sufficient for us during all that is past, has sufficient for all that remains. If He has given us convincing and quickening and justifying and saving grace ; if He has given restraining and strengthening and overcoming grace, will He not also give us dying grace ? Let us not then, through fear of death, be all

our life time subject to bondage. See in the crossing of the Jordan a bright picture of the glorious triumph Christ gives His people over the power of death. Like the ark, Jesus Himself has gone down before us into the bed of death's dark river. He has gone there to show us the way, to make a plain path, to remove every barrier. What cause have we to fear the swellings of Jordan ? They are all restrained by the might of Him at whose girdle hang the keys of hell and of death. Has He not said, "Surely I am with you" ? Should we not then make reply, "Yea, and though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil ; for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" ?

No wonder that the heathen should shrink from death ; no wonder that their greatest sages, philosophers, poets, and statesmen should apply to it epithet upon epithet, expressive of the deepest dejection and dread ; they knew not the grace and power of God. How different are the Christian phrases which speak of death : "Sleep in Jesus," "To depart and to be with Christ," "Absent from the body, AT HOME with the Lord," "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. Where I am there ye shall be also." Thus Jesus comforts our hearts and gives us great encouragement. Let us gaze then on His finished work, let us rest on these words of truth and love till our hearts can say—

" Where are thy waves, O Jordan ?
Thy emptied bed lies dry,
And all its power is broken ;
Thy waters stand on high.

I fear not Jordan's river ;
Its flood is past for me,
And hastening dry-shod over
I soon at rest shall be.

“ I do not dread death's valley,
To me a pasture green,
For there, beside still waters,
Is laid its peaceful scene.
I do not fear death's shadow,
A shadow ne'er can harm ;
I must rejoice in Jesus,
When resting on His arm.

“ O grave ! where is thy victory ?
O death ! where is thy sting ?
Thy sting was lost on Calvary,
Thou art a powerless thing.
Then lead me through thy broken gates,
Where Jesus passed before,
He comes to take me to my home,
Where I shall die no more.”

VIII.

STONES BURIED AND RAISED.

JOSHUA IV.

“What mean ye by these stones?”—JOSH. iv. 6.

“**W**HAT mean ye by these stones?” The question unfolds a youthful tendency, and is stated to enforce a parental duty. Young people are full of curiosity and questions, and it is the duty of older people to strive to meet this tendency with wise instruction and wholesome advice. Consider the facts that would evoke such a question as this. When Israel crossed the Jordan, twelve men, one from each tribe, were appointed to lift twelve stones from the bed of the river, and place them in an orderly heap on the western bank. They were also instructed to carry twelve other stones from the bank, and place them in the bed of the river where the ark had rested. When the priests who bore the ark slowly ascended after all the people, and stood on the sacred soil of the Holy Land, the heaped-up waters at once rushed down the empty channel, and in an instant these twelve stones that had marked the place of their feet were buried out of sight. The other twelve, beside which they now stood, remained, a rude monument to attract the wandering eye and rouse the curiosity of the wayfarer, and

prompt enquiry as to their meaning. In after years, when another generation rose that knew not the mighty deed of that great day, a child walking with his father along that river's bank would naturally point out that cairn and ask this question, "What mean ye by these stones?" And God instructs the parent to be prepared with an answer to that question.

Surely the lesson here is very plain. This youthful tendency still exists, and well it is both for old and young that it does, and woe to those who make light of it, and do not meet it in wisdom and kindness. This tendency is part of the natural constitution of children, and is perhaps the very strongest impulse towards improvement, and the most potent instrument of education that exists. Yet some older people do not like it, and discourage questioning on the part of the young, either because it is a means of revealing their own ignorance or of disturbing their chronic laziness. This ought not to be. All the proper questions of the young should be answered with the most scrupulous accuracy and the most painstaking care. With great clearness and profuse illustration the matter should be put in every possible light, so that there may be no mistake, wherever, of course, it is possible to do so; and in cases where this cannot be done let us never be ashamed to confess our ignorance. By such a confession the most wholesome truth may be taught, viz., that there is a limit to human knowledge on every side; that there are many questions which a child can put, and no man can answer.

This duty of parental instruction is far too much ignored in these days. Some neglect it altogether, even though they have solemnly promised to train up their

children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They generally excuse themselves on the ground of their incompetency, or their pre-occupation with other matters. Neither excuse is valid. Whatever the measure of a parent's ability, this work dare not be neglected. It is not likely that the children of dull people are all geniuses, and the brightest child is always the easiest to teach. Though parents feel their incompetency, that is nothing more than the best teachers have felt again and again, while sorely conscious that they did not possess the mighty leverage which a parent has in virtue of his relation to the child. And we must remember that it was the servant with one talent who received the stern rebuke of the master, and parents who neglect their plain duty on such a poor plea will not be unpunished.

The second excuse, that of being too busy to attend to this matter, is even worse than the first. How many professedly Christian parents are neglecting their families in order to make a little more money. Many rich men are impoverishing themselves in the worst possible direction, while amassing large fortunes. As they are absorbed in gathering gold, they are neglecting their own children, losing their affections, abdicating that royal seat which God has erected with His own hands in each household, and the results are most disastrous. Evil spirits enough there are to set themselves on that vacated throne ; and in the long run parents will find, to their sorrow, that a large fortune is but a poor set-off against a disgraceful family. Remember Jacob. Why was there such a difference between Joseph and his elder brethren ? Chiefly because he had a better teacher than they ; his elder brothers had been badly

trained. Though he and they had one father, he was a very different man at the end of his days to what he was at the beginning. He was so different that God gave him a new name. Now Israel was the teacher of Joseph, but Jacob was the teacher of the others, and that made all the difference in the world. When his eldest boys were young, Jacob's hands were all too full. He was too absorbed in trying to get the better of cunning Laban. He was certainly diligent to know the state of his flocks, he looked well after his herds ; but that other flock, that beautiful flock which God had given him, they were seemingly of less consequence than his sheep or his goats. And their surroundings in childhood were not the best. Laban's house was a bad school for Jacob's boys. It would have been difficult to keep them from harm, had he been ever so careful ; engrossed as he was with the accumulation of wealth, it is no wonder they grew up notorious sinners, bringing his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. How severely was Jacob punished for this neglect in after life, how many and sharp were the sorrows which pierced his soul !

Is it not a fact that some men, like Jacob, are too busy to attend to their children ? It is possible for prosperity to ruin men in the worst way. They love their children ; they slave for them ;—it would be far better if they ceased from some of their labours, gave up some of their gains, to gain what is a far richer treasure, the affections of their children. Children know this, and are often wiser than their parents in this respect. That little girl certainly was who after her father had lost a large fortune said to him, “Papa, I hope you will never be rich again.” “Why, my child ?”

asked the astonished man. "Because when you were rich, you had so much business to attend to that I scarcely ever saw you ; but now you are at home every night, and it is so much better."

And we must remember that Jacob, of whom we speak, was a man who had promised to God that he would devote to His service one-tenth of all that he had. He might have argued, therefore, "The more I gather the more I will have to give to God ; therefore the busier the better." But that would only have been the invention of a sanctimonious excuse for neglecting an uncongenial duty. God never asks us to set aside a primary duty for a secondary ; and if we do, we shall get no thanks from Him, either for our labours or our gifts. This needs to be kept in mind by all. We have known fathers, ay, and mothers too, who so busied themselves in outward Christian work that their own children were utterly neglected. Even their physical wants in some cases were not attended to, to speak nothing of their spiritual. Need we be surprised that the results in so many cases are so sad ? The great need of the Church and of the world in this day is parents who feel their responsibility in this matter, and who seek to discharge this duty under the eye of God. Again and again has God made plain the importance of this work. When Israel left Egypt, He ordained an ordinance which should excite the interest and prompt the questions of children. Now, as they enter into Canaan, He does the same. As before He instructed all parents to be ready with an answer to the question "What mean ye by this service ?" so now He wishes all to be prepared when their children ask, "What mean ye by these stones ?"

And surely the answer would leap to the lips of every parent in that great host ; for none was too ignorant to understand the majesty of that mighty deed. These stones were most emphatically **A MONUMENT OF GREAT MIGHT.** We know something of the marvels which the hand of man has wrought. Small though it is, it has left many a mighty mark on the face of nature ; and as we gaze on some of its engineering triumphs we cannot but be filled with amazement. But what are all the mighty works of men compared with this triumphant entrance into Canaan ? How stupendous, how unparalleled, was the work of carrying Israel across Jordan in this fashion ; yet how easily, how quickly, how quietly, was it all done ! Before the history of this mighty work all the so-called wonders of the world dwindle into insignificance.

Yet these stones formed **A MONUMENT THAT MIGHT BE DESPISED.** Simple and rude it was ; it had no beauty or architectural comeliness, to be desired ; it was nothing more than a rough pyramid of twelve muddy stones. And yet, there is something divine in this very simplicity. Man is ever given to ostentation and pretension. If he ever does a great work, he likes to shout to the world, "Come and see what a great thing I have wrought." Human nature dearly loves a loud trumpeter. Thus did Nebuchadnezzar congratulate himself mightily on the great Babylon he had built. This every heart is inclined to do ; ay, even in connection with the most sacred work. If therefore man, by some engineering marvel, had been able to accomplish such a work as we have been considering, what a sounding of trumpets there would have been ! Would he not have set to work to hand down its memory to all ages by

some stupendous monument? An Egyptian pyramid might have seemed too insignificant. The contrast between God's manner of commemoration and man's must have been very striking to Joshua. He had often seen the pyramids in Egypt, marked their colossal proportions, counted their massive stones. He knew the secrets which they hid, the purpose of their erection ; and what a contrast was there between these mountains of masonry on the banks of the Nile, the toilsome task of hundreds of thousands of over-driven slaves for many years, and this little heap on the banks of Jordan, the work of twelve men in a few moments ! With what contempt would an Egyptian look down upon it. But, after all, ostentation is human, simplicity is divine ; for though, from a human point of view, the wonder commemorated here was very great, what was it from the Divine? Nothing. What, after all, was the opening up of this passage, to Him who upholds all things by the word of His power, who gathers the waters in the hollow of His hand, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing? Nothing, and less than nothing. It was easy for the men of Israel to raise such a monument. Yes ; yet it was harder for them to heap up these stones than for God to heap up these waters ; and all the might that reared the pyramids could never have congealed these depths.

AGAIN, THIS MONUMENT HAD A WORLD-WIDE REFERENCE AND A SPECIAL APPLICATION. Most monuments have a very restricted reference. They speak to a political or a religious community ; to the inhabitants of a city or the natives of a country, or to the members of a common faith ; but this simple monument on Jordan's bank has a voice for all mankind. Though it has long since dis-

appeared, though no man can point its place, and no child can put the old question ; still pictured and preserved in the pages of God's Word it calls to all men, "The Lord He is God." It spoke in thunder to the kingdoms of Canaan, and never from that day has its testimony been hushed. It tells out to all generations that God is great. Ingenious books have been written to show that we have an inheritance in the Great Pyramid of Egypt. That may be disputed, but there is no doubt that all mankind have an inheritance in this little pyramid in Canaan. This wonder was wrought not only for the good of Israel, but for the instruction of all ages. It gives a declaration of God's mighty power, so clear and emphatic, that if men do not hear its testimony, it is because they have stopped their ears.

And if it had, for the human race as a whole, a great lesson to teach, it was fraught with special instruction to the Israel of God. While its reference was to all, its primary application and its immediate benefits were for them. They stood at the very heart of the secret meaning of this wonder. They had been prepared for it ; they knew the purpose for which it was wrought ; therefore it was to them doubly precious. To all men it cried, "God is mighty ;" to Israel it testified, "This God abides thy God for evermore." He is your refuge and strength. Therefore this monument was set up that they might remember and fear the Lord for ever and walk in His ways, and do His commandments. What reverence and godly fear, what confidence and peace, ought to have been the portion of a people thus led. To combine the knowledge of God's power with the knowledge of God's love gives indestructible conso-

lation. To look on His wondrous works and learn His might ; to look again and know that these are the workings of a Father's hand, of One whom we know and love, who knows and loves us,—this is perfect peace.

Other lessons are taught by these stones. They were twelve in number, arranged in their places by twelve warriors, one from each tribe ; therefore it is plain that the whole people are represented by these stones. Also there were two sets of twelve stones : one set in the bed of the river, buried by its waters ; another raised from the bed of the river, and piled upon its bank. Therefore we have here **THE WHOLE PEOPLE REPRESENTED IN TWO DIFFERENT ASPECTS.** The twelve buried stones speak of Israel in one relation ; the twelve raised in another.

Think of the buried. What mean ye by these stones ? They lie on the bottom of the river, covered by its muddy waters. They represent God's chosen people, for they are twelve. That strange place therefore in which they lie, must be a representation of some spiritual and important truth concerning Israel. What is it ? Here, as in many other portions of Scripture history, we have a Divine object-lesson. There is a spiritual sense in which all the people of Israel are in a position corresponding to that of these stones. What is this position ? What is that lesson ? To be able to answer these questions, we must remember God's past dealings with these people as well as the relation which these things have to His purposes in grace. "The Lord thy God is a jealous God"—thus spoke Moses to Israel ; and above all He is jealous of the glory of His grace. His honour as a

Saviour He will not suffer to be tarnished. The principle on which He is prepared to bless a sinful people must always be made plain. Accordingly He spares no pains to show that entrance to His inheritance in all its riches, the enjoyment of all its blessings, is never by human energy or in virtue of creature holiness, but that all depends on the almighty energy of His own sovereign grace. Again and again had this truth been declared ; and here on the threshold of the land, by the expressive symbol of these buried stones, He adds another proof that His people can enter in, simply and solely on the ground of His gracious promise and mighty power, even as it is written, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

The death of those who came out of Egypt made this very plain. They had listened to His holy law declared from Sinai. Not knowing their own spiritual weakness, they had readily promised to obey it from beginning to end. "All that the Lord commandeth us we will do"—was their solemn league and covenant. Alas ! alas ! how little did they know their own hearts. Scarcely had this universal promise crossed their lips, than they began sinning against God most grievously. Times without number the men who had thus promised perfect obedience proved their unworthiness ; and not one of that generation entered into Canaan. The fathers, where are they ? Their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Their bones lie buried beneath its barren sand. Every camping-ground in that forty years' march was turned into a place of mourning for the dead. Every resting-place had its sepulchre. Their march could be traced only by the

tombs they left behind. Now the children have arisen in place of the fathers, and they are about to enter in. What is their title to the inheritance ? Is it better than that of their fathers ? Is it true that they are worthy ; that they have clean hands and a pure heart, and have not lifted up their souls unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully ? Is it true that they are righteous ? Can they claim entrance because of their obedience to the law ? Nay, by the law shall no man be justified ; and this burying of the twelve stones most solemnly emphasises this declaration. Though better far than their fathers, not one in that host—not even the veteran Joshua, nor his old companion in arms the noble Caleb,—can dare to claim a right to entrance on his own merits. These buried stones display most vividly the place that belonged to them, if they were dealt with according to their deserts. Therefore bring the stones, ye men of Israel, one for each tribe ; plant them there, down in the oozy mud ; bury them in the centre of the river bed, in a grave like that of Alaric, which shall know no resurrection ; and then let the black river roll over them, and the eye of man see them no more for ever. O Israel, that is your just place ; a place deserved through your sins, yet, mystery of Divine wisdom ! a place given you in grace for sin's destruction and your entrance into life.

Thus the twelve buried stones declare that, figuratively, the twelve tribes left themselves behind ; and that they marched into Canaan new men, quickened into new life. As their fathers were literally buried beneath the sand of the desert, so were they figuratively buried beneath the waves of Jordan. Thus plainly and emphatically does God teach

that "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven." The sinner must leave the old man behind ; the body of sin must be destroyed ; we must be born again ere ever we see or enter into the kingdom of God. Only through death and judgment can any sinner obtain a place in the heavenly inheritance and be blessed with spiritual blessings. Therefore, this scene, enacted on the entrance of Israel into Canaan, may be looked upon as a pictorial commentary on the sixth chapter of Romans. There the apostle tells us that we are buried with Christ by baptism into death. We are identified with Him in His death, "Crucified with Christ." As when Adam died, all mankind died in him ; so when Christ the second Adam died, all that believe died in Him. In our glorious Substitute, we bear all the penalty due to sin, and thus gain entrance into the heritage of blessing. Understanding the mystery of that cross we see how it is possible to leave our old selves—the flesh with all its roots and fruits of wickedness—and enter into life new creatures, all old things passed away, all things become new. Do we ask, where is the old man, the body of sin ? The cross and grave of Christ give answer : It is gone, clean gone for ever ; lost sight of, as these stones in the bed of Jordan. They are buried to know no resurrection ; yea, God tells us He has cast them behind His back, into the depths of the sea, a far deeper grave than Jordan.

Through Alaric I., the Goths first learned the way to Rome. He and his rugged hosts were everywhere invincible. All Italy, luxurious and effeminate, lay at his feet. He extended his conquest as far south as Sicily. But at Cosenza in Calabria he was seized with

a deadly malady. When he died his followers had to face a great difficulty. What were they to do with the dead body of their great leader? It was impossible to carry it back over Italian plain and snowy Alp to the dark forests of his fatherland. It dare not be left to the mockery and desecration of the caitiffs he had conquered. Therefore they determined to bury it in the bed of the river Busento. They set their captives to the task of diverting the stream from its channel, and there in its dry bed they dug the grave of Alaric. Then, when he was buried deep in his rocky tomb, and the waters rolled once more in their wonted channel, to hide for ever the secret of this strange sepulchre, all the captives were put to death. These Goths wished to give their king a grave which no hand could reach. Even such a grave has God given our sins, and here in these stones we behold a picture of what He has done. We are buried with Christ. Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God by Christ Jesus our Lord.

But there were twelve stones raised upon the bank as well as twelve buried in the bed of Jordan, and we may well ask "What mean ye by these stones?" This is the positive side of the same truth we have been considering. As the buried stones speak of death, so the raised speak of resurrection. We are not only buried with Christ, but are also quickened with Him, raised with Him, and seated with Him in heavenly places. We are not only planted in the likeness of His death, we are also raised in the likeness of His resurrection. The place of that pile of twelve stones is the picture of the sure place which the redeemed of the Lord occupy in His inheritance. Planted there they go no more out, they are part and parcel of the inheritance.

The cross of Christ, like these twelve stones, is a monument of might, for it declares God's power unto salvation to all that believe. Yet it is a monument that many despise ; a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence ; to the Jew weakness and to the Greek folly ; but to those that believe, whether Jew or Greek, the power and the wisdom of God. It is also a monument for all mankind ; the rallying point of a lost humanity, even as Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Specially is it precious to those that believe ; who are at the heart of the glorious secret it contains ; they ever cry, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." Our entrance into God's inheritance, our place there, depend altogether on the atoning death and the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The twelve buried stones picture our place on account of sin ; the twelve raised declare our place on account of righteousness. The first speak of weakness ; the second of might. The one declares "all old things are passed away ;" the other, "all things are become new."

These twelve stones set on Jordan's bank were raised from Jordan's bed. That river, as it were, begot them. They were of it, from it, out of it. Even so the Church of Christ is begotten and brought forth from His death. The agonies of Christ crucified were the travail pangs of the new creation. He is the corn of wheat, and except He die, no fruit can be brought forth. He is the true Adam, and while He sleeps in death His bride is fashioned. As His people are buried with Him so are they quickened, "Begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead." Yes, it is a "Lively hope." The great

Pyramid of Egypt was after all a monument of despair, "The eternal abode" of the dead. This little pyramid of Canaan is a pyramid of hope; placed in the goodly land conspicuously and permanently; reminding those that believe that we are not only raised with Christ, but seated with Him in heavenly places—that we are henceforth a constituent part of His inheritance. Thus the ransomed of the Lord can never be hidden, can never be removed. They are an eternal monument of Divine wisdom, power, and love, having a permanent and glorious place in the kingdom of their Father.

IX.

THE REPROACH OF EGYPT.

JOSHUA V. 1-9.

“The Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal, unto this day.”—JOSH. V. 9.

A STRANGE thing took place at Gilgal, the first resting-place of Israel after it had passed the Jordan. No sooner had the people encamped for the first time in the promised land than Joshua received and carried out the Divine command : “ Make thee sharp knives ” (or, as in margin, “ knives of flint ”) and circumcise the children of Israel the second time.” To the natural understanding nothing could appear more completely out of place. This pause in their march would seem to human wisdom idiotic, and the act performed suicidal. The wise men of this world would not have hesitated to say to Joshua, “ Do you call this generalship ? After the advantage you have gained, to pause at all is bad ; to pause for such a purpose is worse ; to pause for this purpose at such a time and in such a place is worst of all.” But if the natural eye can see nothing but temerity in this, if the natural understanding can give it no name but folly, God’s eye can see triumph and read wisdom therein ; for it is the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt, the scattering

of the last remnant of that black cloud of disfavour which had hitherto hung over them, the breaking of the last link of that strong chain of dishonour which connected them with their degraded past.

But what are we to understand by the reproach of Egypt ? In order to have a clear conception of this, we must remember the condition of Israel when it crossed the Jordan. They passed that barrier while still uncircumcised. They had wandered in the wilderness for the greater part of forty years, without bearing in their bodies the distinguishing mark of God's chosen people, the seal of Jehovah's covenant. The fact that this solemn sacrament has fallen into abeyance for so lengthened a period is very startling ; whether we consider how emphatic was the command enforcing its observance, how severe was the penalty inflicted on the neglect of it, or how deep was the respect entertained for it. What was the reason for this strange suspension of this sealing ordinance, during all these years of wandering ? Was it forgetfulness on the part of Moses their leader ? Among his multifarious duties was this crowded out as of subsidiary importance, a matter not demanding his attention ? The supposition cannot be entertained for a moment. Never could Moses forget that startling scene in the inn as he went down to Egypt with the message to Pharaoh, "Let my people go." There, though he was the Lord's messenger, accredited by the most marvellous signs, the angel of the Lord met him, and would have slain him because he had neglected this very ordinance. The Lord had a deadly quarrel with His own messenger, because his sons were uncircumcised. "It came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone,

and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision" (Exod. iv. 24-26). That scene must have been indelibly printed on the memory of Moses; therefore the cessation of this ordinance cannot be traced to the forgetfulness of Moses, as some have supposed.

Neither did it arise from the exigencies of the march. Though the people were continually moving from camp to camp, there was nothing in this of itself to prevent the performance of this rite upon their children. What then was the reason? The requirements of the God of truth, we answer. He tells us that these forty years of wandering were the time of His "Breach of promise." And this fact must be acknowledged by all. It was through Israel's unfaithfulness that this breach of promise had occurred. They rejected Him utterly, both when at the foot of Sinai they made a calf and worshipped it; and when, on the borders of Canaan, they called for a captain to lead them back to Egypt. His anger burned hot against them for these things, and He showed His displeasure in two ways. He caused them to wander in the wilderness, till all that wicked generation passed away. He refused to put His seal upon their offspring. He did not put them beyond His mercy, therefore they shared His watchful care and constant guidance. But all the while, Israel as a people was under a cloud, and every boy that was born, as well as every warrior that was buried, reminded them of the bitter fact. The carrying out of that rite during these years would have been an ignoring of the past, would have been a

declaration that all was well, that they were in a right relation to God. Therefore God forbids the performance of this rite. He must have truth from the centre outwards. The things that are true are in matters spiritual of fundamental importance. Hollow rites and empty ceremonies He cannot carry away with, much less can He tolerate the acting of a lie. When circumcision has no meaning, or when a false interpretation would be put upon it, circumcision must cease. But now the years of God's breach of promise have come to an end. All are dead who sinned in unbelief; His judgment is satisfied. Their children have in figure come through death in Jordan's flood, as their fathers on the night of the passover and at the Red Sea. Israel as a nation stands on the old ground, and God again acknowledges them; they must be circumcised.

This explains the strange act of Gilgal, and opens up the meaning of the reproach of Egypt which was then rolled away. By this reproach we are to understand all that stigma which clung to Israel through its relation to Egypt. This stigma had two aspects, an inner and an outer; an active and a passive. It consisted in that feeling of humiliation and self-reproach, which must have rested on the heart of every intelligent and pious Israelite during the wilderness wanderings. And it also consisted in the feeling of scorn and contempt with which their great oppressors the Egyptians must have looked upon them during all that period.

In its inward aspect, the reproach of Egypt was caused by spiritual assimilation to Egypt. Moses had said, "The Lord will put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." This difference was manifested

in many striking ways, during the progress of Israel's gradual emancipation. But when this rite was in abeyance, this difference was lost in a measure. Physically, there was no difference between the children born in Egypt after the Exodus and those born in the wilderness. Circumcision was, as it were, God's brand on His people marking them for His own. Its lack proclaimed that they were "Lo Ammi," not God's people. But there could be no greater outward stigma than this. It was Israel's glory to be Jehovah's peculiar people and to bear in their bodies the seal of His covenant. From this height of privilege they looked down on all men. This was the point of David's reproach to Goliath when he called him an uncircumcised Philistine. For an Israelite therefore to consider his position during the forty years, would be to acknowledge that there was no difference, so far, between him and an Egyptian. Jehovah was no longer, in this mode of outward recognition, his God.

But there was a deeper and more potent assimilation, of which the outward and physical was only the sign. There was on the part of Israel assimilation to Egypt in spirit. Indeed the assimilation was first spiritual and then physical. Israel loathed the light food God provided for them in the wilderness, and longed for the leeks, the cucumbers, and the garlic which they had enjoyed in Egypt. They reproached God for their redemption, saying that He had brought them from Egypt to destroy them; they actually went the length of appointing a leader to guide them back to the house of bondage. What could be more grievous than such sin? what could more plainly show their assimilation in heart to Egypt? Therefore to a pious and penitent

Israelite there was here cause for the deepest abasement. His cry in self-reproach would be, "My sin is ever before me." This also would be implied in the inner aspect of the reproach of Egypt.

But in addition to this inner aspect of the reproach, there is also the outer to be considered. The reproach of Egypt not only consisted in those feelings which must have taken possession of a pious Israelite ; but also in those taunts which must have been hurled at them by Egypt. Their haughty taskmasters would no doubt make their former bondmen a subject of reproach and mocking scorn. They would look down upon them, and speak of them with unutterable contempt. They would describe them as a despicable race of worthless runaways. If their children asked, "Who are these people that we hear are wandering up and down the wilderness of Sinai ?" the fathers would answer, "They were our drudges and slaves ; our brick-makers and hod-carriers ; our hewers of wood and drawers of water. They toiled for us day and night ; they cultivated our fields ; they built our treasure cities ; they laughed at our smiles, trembled at our power, and writhed under our lash ; contemptible slaves they were and are." Such mockery is the delight of the oppressor. And they would also find good cause for merriment in the prolonged wanderings in the wilderness. "Where are all their high hopes ?" they might have said, "They have ended in smoke. A great deal better off they are now than they were with us, hungering and thirsting in that desert, instead of living on the fat of the land ! A nice wild goose chase that famous Moses has led them." What an unfailing source of amusement to the Egyptians would that aimless wandering in-

the wilderness be. How scornful would be their criticisms of Moses' leadership and of his God's deceitful promises. This also was the reproach of Egypt, a reproach so keenly felt by Moses, that he used it as an argument to dissuade God from utterly exterminating the people.

Such was the reproach of Egypt; but here and now it is rolled away. By this act at Gilgal Israel is no longer assimilated to Egypt in body. The knives of flint have again put a difference between Israel and Egypt. That hill of foreskins declares that this degrading similarity no longer exists. Each man bears in his body the mark of Jehovah's covenant. In his own flesh, each has the witness that God has reinstated him into all the rights and privileges of His chosen people. No longer are they "Lo Ammi" but "Ammi."

And seeing the land of Canaan was God's gift to them as Abraham's seed; and to Abraham's seed as faithful to Jehovah, *i.e.*, as circumcised; this act was a Divine and formal conveyance of the land to these men of Israel. Thus at Gilgal the title-deeds of Canaan were signed, sealed, and delivered; and thus again, the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Israel is no longer a homeless wanderer but an heir of God.

Also the assimilation to Egypt in spirit has come to an end. No longer are they uncircumcised in heart. God has forgiven all their iniquities; they are as completely obliterated as the twelve stones are lost sight of in Jordan's flood. Standing thus in that good land, a good spirit takes possession of them. Never again do they cast a longing, lingering look behind. Never again do they desire to elect a leader to take them back to bondage. Their hearts are completely

divorced from Egypt. They cling to God with a steadfastness of faith and affection which is truly admirable. Their very obedience to this command exhibits their faith in the brightest light. Why do they submit to this ordinance so cheerfully, in such a place and at such a time? Because they trust in God. He will protect them in their pain and weakness. He will cause the fear of them to rest upon their enemies, till they have received new strength for the work of war. Yea, they gladly submit because they consider it their highest privilege to be outwardly recognised as God's people, to bear in their bodies the marks of His chosen race. Former things have passed away. All things have become new. The devout trust and deep gladness of this hour are unparalleled in the history of this people. Truly they are circumcised in heart. Truly the reproach of Egypt is rolled away.

And as their hearts exult at these things, so must the rancorous tongues of their enemies have been silenced. No longer can Egypt mock them as a rabble of slaves. They are Jehovah's freemen; a host glorious, invincible, blessed. No longer can they scoff at their wanderings. Rather will their cheeks pale at the mention of a miracle, more wonderful than that by which the power of Egypt was broken and the flower of their people swept away. Ye braggarts of Zoan's field, be dumb for ever. The reproach of Egypt is rolled away.

Surely this transaction is also recorded for our instruction and reproof. Have God's people in these days no need of a Gilgal, a place of mortification, of the crucifixion of the flesh? Is there no assimilation to the world, first inward in the heart, then outward in the life? Who of keenest spiritual sense, of widest

charity, can discern the line that separates world from Church ; the unbelieving from the believing ? How many who profess and call themselves Christians are grovelling before some golden calf in the delusions of will-worship, or longing for a leader to take them back to the wicked and ensnaring world !

This rite observed at Gilgal had a spiritual meaning, well understood in the Old Testament, and clearly explained in the New. Some are “circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the sins of the flesh.” “We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” “As new born babes, put off all malice and guile and hypocrisies and envies and evil speakings.” Jordan says, “You are dead with Christ, you are raised with Him ; therefore reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God.” Gilgal says, “Put off the old man with his affections and lusts ; put off all moral and spiritual assimilation to the world. Crucify the flesh and its deceitful lusts. Mortify the deeds of the body.”

The great need of the present age is to be brought in spirit to Gilgal, *i.e.*, to learn to the very centre of our souls the spirit of self-sacrifice. Nothing is further from the thoughts of most, for they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God ; yet nothing is more indispensable for peace or strength. The process may be painful, like cutting off a right arm or plucking out a right eye ; yet it is the necessary sequel of entrance into God’s inheritance. All who truly have a portion in the blessings which Christ has purchased ; all who are crucified, buried, raised, and seated with Him, put off the old man and live a new life. And as it is the neces-

sary sequel of entrance, so is it the necessary prelude to worship and to victory. There can be no true worship of God except our hearts are cleansed from the filthiness of the flesh. There can be no true victory for God, either within or without, except our souls are purged from the power of sin. Hence we must ever put our trust in Jesus, submit to all the influences of the Holy Spirit, and order all our way by the light of God's Word. Nor can we ever get beyond such experiences. To the end of our days, till the war of sin is for ever over, we must make Gilgal our camp, returning to it after every victory as well as after every defeat, so that we may have good success in this holy war.

X.

CORN FOR MANNA.

"The manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land."—JOSH. v. 12.

AFTER receiving the title-deeds of an estate, the next step is to enter into possession. And one of the best evidences that this has been done, is to take the use of all that the inheritance contains. Thus the Israel of God acted. By the circumcision at Gilgal the reproach of Egypt was rolled away, the title-deeds of Canaan were put into their hands, and now we see them entering into possession, taking their use of all that the land contains. All this was done in an orderly, solemn, and godly manner. There was no unseemly display of haste and self-will; but every evidence of docile and reverent obedience. They acknowledge God in all their ways. First they celebrate the solemn feast of the passover, and then partake of the fruits of the land. This observance of the passover would be new to most of them. Only twice before in their history has it been celebrated. The first time was on the night of its institution in the land of Egypt. The second occasion was at the foot of Sinai. Now for the third time in their history, for the first time in the experience of the great majority, they bring to mind by this expressive feast the story of

God's protecting care and great deliverance. Thus they fittingly acknowledge the good hand of God in their redemption from Egypt, their guidance through the wilderness, and their entrance into the land. Immediately after this seemly service they partake of the fruits of Canaan ; they enjoy the privileges and blessings of the goodly land. In this connection two things are coupled together, the eating of the corn and the cessation of the manna. The change from manna to corn was very sudden ; it occurred in one day. It was very complete ; they never saw the manna any more. It was very unexpected ; no warning of any kind was given. This made the change all the more striking, and would rouse men to ponder the meaning of it.

THIS SUDDEN CHANGE WOULD BRING TO MIND GOD'S POWER. It is a well-known fact that our ears may get so accustomed to a sound as to be unconscious of it. In like manner men may get so accustomed to the wonders of God's might as to be unmoved by them. But just as we may be roused to the consciousness of a long-continued sound by its sudden cessation, so the sudden arrestment of the manna shower would serve to exalt the power of God. Try to conceive the effect it must have had upon the Israelites. Two-thirds of them were under forty years of age. From their earliest infancy they had been accustomed to the fall of the manna. As regularly as the dew fell every morning, so came the manna, pure, white, delicate, fit food of angels ; the ambrosia of heaven scattered like hoar-frost around all their tents. Their earliest thoughts and feelings, desires and hopes, wound around this daily gift. Whenever they had been

able to totter from the tent, they had imitated their elders in picking up that manna which was so delicious to their simple and natural tastes. The thing that would impress them most in connection with the weekly Sabbath would be the cessation of this manna. Sabbath to the children would be the day on which no manna fell. Therefore it would be Jehovah teaching the children, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." But we know something of the human heart. It can get so accustomed to the grand, the mighty, and the marvellous that they produce little or no effect. Familiarity does breed contempt. Therefore we can well conceive that the constant repetition of this miracle would dull their consciousness of its grandeur and might. They would be apt to forget that it was God's Almighty hand that fed them in the wasteful wilderness. They would perchance think as little of it as we do of the distilling of the dew or the falling of the snow and rain. But this sudden stoppage of the manna must have arrested them all. It would be as if the sun had risen in the west. How strikingly would it teach them that this was a gift of Almighty power ! As they stood that first morning and beheld the uncovered ground, must they not have felt a solemn awe at the thought of the power of the past, and exclaim, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty "? The manna came not a day sooner than it was needed, and it did not stay a day later.

They beheld the manna no more : but they saw instead fields white unto the harvest, and the power of Jehovah matured the one as truly as it sent the other. The might which brought the manna from its treasure house is not exhausted, neither is it limited

in its operations. As it has worked for them in the past so will it in the future; quite as truly if not quite so directly.

Thus the consciousness of Jehovah's power would be very profitable to Israel. Perhaps we have had a similar experience to that of this people. God has been supplying our wants of mind, body, and estate during all the past years of our life; and it may be we have been forgetting that we owe all to His power; therefore, to rouse us to this consciousness, He cuts off these supplies. The shock is great. Astonishment fills our hearts. Sorrow lays hold on us; indeed, we may be tempted to despair. Is this seemly? Nay. If we are His there is never room for despair. We can never drift beyond His love and care. He who has provided for the past will provide for the future. If the fields are no longer white with manna, it is because they are white unto the harvest. "Jehovah Jireh"—The Lord will provide.

The cessation of the manna would also MAGNIFY His GRACE. Surely these highly-favoured pilgrims, arrived at their blessed goal, would adore Jehovah's goodness as they pondered all the past. Goodness and mercy had followed them every step of that wilderness journey. It was indeed a mighty Hand that fed them there, but first of all a loving Heart devised liberal things concerning them in that waste and uninhabited land. Jehovah ministered to them as a father to the children in whom he delights; and never did His gifts fail, not even when they were thankless, discontented, rebellious. His mercy endureth for ever. How stiff-necked and stubborn had they often been. He might well have left them to their own devices, and if they had

perished miserably it would have only been their desert ; but no, He had regard not to their sinful whims and graceless humours, but to their great necessities and His own promises. Whatever their feelings and thoughts and deeds, whatever their spiritual state during these years, His supply never varied, was never suspended for a single day. Surely in this we read the matchless wonder of His changeless love, we hear the emphatic declaration that His gifts are without repentance.

And surely in our earthly course we too have had experience of this goodness of God. How gracious, how changeless has He been with His gifts. Notwithstanding our forgetfulness, thanklessness, rebellion, He has never cast us off, He has never left us to ourselves. He who has thus dealt with us in the past, will continue to do so to the end. Surely, then, a grateful remembrance of God's past goodness should fill us with a deep sense of security in regard to the future.

“ His love in times past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last, in trouble to sink ;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His sweet pleasure to help me quite through.”

This event would also EXALT HIS LIBERALITY. There is a great change in the material supplied to Israel for its physical wants. But it is a change, not from better to worse, rather from good to better. The supply of the wilderness was liberal, and as the years roll on God does not grow less liberal, nor feel the drain on His resources too heavy. God never acts on the human and pinching principle, “ first the good wine and afterwards that which is worse.” It is His delight

to reverse this rule. He treats His people better and better. For forty years He had bestowed upon Israel one kind of food as their staple article of diet ; now He bestows upon them a rich variety, even all the fruits of Canaan. For forty years they had been accustomed to food of the same flavour ; now there is great diversity, a supply to suit every taste. During these past years the supply was measured, there was a fixed quantity for each ; now the store is unlimited.

As it was with Israel in regard to this bodily provision, so is it with the children of God in regard to that which is spiritual. They receive grace and more grace. They go from strength to strength. With ever-increasing capacity comes more and more abundant supply. And this law not only regulates Christian experience on earth and in time, it will also hold in heaven and in eternity. Faith, Hope, and Love are graces that abide for ever. As the ages of eternity roll on, the glorified will have new reason to repose all their trust in God ; they will look forward with eager hope to higher manifestations of His glory ; their hearts will drink deeper and more blessed draughts of the wine of His love, and be ravished with an ever-growing bliss. This is the eternal law. As the asymptote approaches nearer and nearer its curve, but though infinitely extended never meets it ; so the people of God, in unclouded communion with Him, through all eternity come nearer and nearer His likeness in every blessed and holy and wise and powerful experience, yet still they ever remain creatures, beings dependent on His bounty, in whose hearts dwell faith, hope, and love.

This cessation of the manna would also serve to

DISPLAY GOD'S CAREFULNESS. God is very liberal, but with all His liberality there is no wastefulness. There is a marvellous economy both in the forces of nature and the manifestations of grace. God always appraises His gifts at their true value, and would have us do the same. If He makes a richer provision for Israel's wants, at the same time He takes away the manna. Had this gift been continued, it is quite possible that it might have fallen into disesteem, and have been looked upon as an ordinary product of nature, perhaps inferior to many others. Such a contingency was neither impossible nor improbable. For we know that the manna was despised and called in contempt "light food," which their souls loathed, even when it was their only supply. What more likely then that when they were surrounded with all the abundance of that land flowing with milk and honey, they would lightly esteem this manna. Now God will never be so lavish of His gifts as to allow them to be scorned as superfluous. When He gives them the abundance of Canaan He takes away the manna. When men become careless or indifferent concerning His heavenly gifts, we need never be surprised if He takes them away.

This cessation of the manna also EXHIBITED GOD'S WISDOM. The manna was suited to the state of the people in the wilderness, it was not so convenient an article of food in Canaan. For their new surroundings and their new work, corn was better than manna. Whether or not it was more nourishing, it did not demand the same punctuality and regularity in gathering, and therefore was more suitable as the supply of soldiers. Corn would keep for an indefinite time, manna would not ; therefore for those whose time would

be so fully occupied, and yet whose hours of rest and work would be so uncertain, the corn was better.

Also to have continued the supply regularly or intermittently, even for those who were not fighting, would have bred indolent and luxurious habits. It is good for man to be busy. Idleness ruins a race with fearful rapidity, because it saps all the foundations of manly vigour. The continued gift of the manna would therefore have been a curse to Israel instead of a blessing. It would have been ruinous to their industry. It would have kept them out of the best school of the manly virtues, the struggle for sturdy independence. Perhaps some might think it a very spiritual and delightful thing to live in the land by faith in a God who would shower down manna into their mouths from one year's end to the other. Certainly such a mode of life would be very pleasant for all those who were too lazy to dig and who were ashamed to beg; but such a state of things would not be healthy or sensible, let alone spiritual, and would have a most pernicious effect on the character of all those thus dealt with. Yet are there not in these days some political agitators who declare that it is the duty of paternal government to put bread into the mouth of every idler?—

“What is a Communist? One who hath yearnings
For equal division of unequal earnings.
Idler or bungler, or both, he is willing
To pay out his penny, and pocket your shilling.”

Surely this incident in the career of Israel condemns all such sin and folly. Even in this theocracy, even in the case of a people directly under One whose resources are limitless, yea, who had supplied all their wants for forty years,—even here industry is the rule.

"Living by faith," what is it? A grand thing much abused by some, and grossly caricatured by others. It does not consist in sitting with folded hands, and opening our mouths for manna to fill them; but in employing those means God has put within our reach to earn an honest livelihood. The man who neglects all legitimate means to obtain an honest living, however oily his tongue and unctuous his cant about the life of faith, is not trusting but tempting Providence, and sooner or later God will let him know this. If you are in a wilderness where it would be sheer waste to throw corn in the sand; and if you are sure that it is God's will that you should abide there, then assuredly you live by faith when you look up to God for manna. But if your lot is cast in a fat and fertile Canaan you must live by faith after a different fashion. Then you must cast your coat, lay your hand on the axe, and then on the plough; you must clear the soil and make the furrow deep; you must cast in the seed, wait till the time of harvest, reap and thrash and grind the grain; and if you do not, then something more than Scripture will teach you that if a man does not work neither shall he eat.

As it is with material things so is it with spiritual. As the manna was taken away, so often spiritual experiences vanish to make room for others. Anything which does not serve the purpose for which it was first given may well be taken away. Thus we find as we pass through time that though many gifts, good, seasonable, necessary, are taken away, there are always compensations which leave us no losers. We have never any cause of complaint, for if God takes away manna it is because there is plenty of corn in

Canaan. In the journey of spiritual experience we may leave behind us the rapturous glow of our first love, the iron vigour and ceaseless energy of spiritual manhood, the mellow richness of our golden prime ; but at each stage we will invariably find that God has dealt with us as He dealt with Israel, that He has given new and better blessings for all that He has taken away. Even at the end, when most of the outward activities can be our portion no longer, in ripened fruits and golden grain we have advantages which become the condition to which we have attained. Yea, we have spiritual nourishment which strengthens our souls and fits us for God's service, even better than the sweet and pleasant manna with which we were nourished when the dews of our youth were fresh upon us.

Only let us remember that there is for all our spiritual wants an abundant and varied supply in Christ Jesus. Whatever our stage of spiritual experience, He can meet our necessities. Let us see to it that we have healthy spiritual appetites. This is not so common as it ought to be. There are not a few spiritual dyspeptics in these days ; and the cause of this is to be traced not so much to the head as to the heart. Paul had to feed the Corinthians with milk, and not with meat. Why ? Because of their mental incapacity ? No. These Corinthians were very clever, and very gifted. It was because of their moral and spiritual incapacity that he had to do this. Envy and strife and divisions were among them ; envy with jaundiced eye unable to see any good in a neighbour ; strife carping and criticising every word and action ; division splitting up the Church into little

cliques and coteries. They were carnal and walked as men ; they were governed by pride ; therefore Paul was not able to feed them with anything but milk ; he nursed them as invalids or children. Alas ! alas ! this Corinthian dyspepsia is still prevalent. Let us beware of it. Let us strive, by wholesome exercise in spiritual work and careful attention to Divine rules of conduct, to secure healthy spiritual appetites and escape the curse of being miserable dyspeptics. Let us grow in our appreciation of the fulness in Christ Jesus, finding in Him both corn and manna and every pleasant fruit ; all that can satisfy and strengthen ; then shall we be blessed indeed and fit for God's service.

But perhaps these words may be read by one whose soul is famishing, who is perishing for want of the bread of life. There is a bitter famine in the soul of every sinner, a hunger most painful. He may try to appease it with husks that are only fit for swine, but fail he must. Turn then to the true, the only, the sufficient supply of your soul's wants, Jesus Christ—

“ With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angels' food to feast ? ”

Behold the true bread that cometh down from heaven. It is for you. Eat and live.

XI.

THE VISION FOR THE GREAT CAMPAIGN.

“As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.”—JOSH. iv. 14.

SEE the British fleet lying anchored at Spithead. It is in commission for an important expedition. Every ship has orders to be ready to sail at a moment's notice. Accordingly all are ready. Every officer, every man, every boy is aboard. The captains are assured that every preparation is completed; that all stores of every description are laid in; that steam is up, and that in a moment their ships can be under weigh. Why then do they not hurry seaward? Is not this delay a waste of precious time? No, for the admiral is not yet on board the flagship. The supreme, responsible, directing mind, on whose energy and ability the whole nation is depending, is not yet at his post. See, here he comes. Every ship acknowledges the little craft that bears his flag; he steps on the quarter deck of the vessel he commands, the signal for departure is hoisted; all are off. Such an event as that will give some idea of the meaning of this part of the sacred narrative. Israel has received orders to enter on this momentous campaign. All things are ready for a beginning. They have crossed the river; they have been circumcised; they have kept the feast; they have partaken of the corn of the land; why then this pause? Because they

wait for Him who is their Captain. Joshua and the people under him were not aware of the full meaning of this pause. They had received Divine instructions, and they wait patiently in obedience to them. For Joshua it must have been a time of supreme anxiety. The events of the past few days were fitted to strengthen him greatly ; but the responsibility of acting, for the first time, on his own resources, must have weighed heavily on him. He has no Moses on whom to fall back in an emergency, hence the sleepless activity which characterises his conduct at this crisis.

All his thoughts are concentrated in Jericho, the key of Canaan. We are told that he was "in" Jericho. That is to say, he was not only near it, but also all his faculties were absorbed in seeking to find out how to take it. He pondered how he could best assault those massive and frowning battlements, fringed with strong and watchful warriors. He looked anxiously for any weak point in its defences, but the more he looked, the more he pondered, the more difficult seemed the task. As he gazed he drew nearer and nearer the city ; and suddenly a stately figure started up before him ; a mighty champion, ready for the fray, for he had a drawn sword in his hand. Nothing daunted, the brave Joshua stalked forward and challenged the stranger with the clear, curt, soldier-like demand, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries ?" The answer he received was even more startling than the vision—"Nay, neither Israelite nor Canaanite am I : no recruit attracted to either standard ; but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Joshua heard. The truth of the situation went right home. He took no offence at the absolute ignoring of himself. Without a

shadow of official pride, or sophistical hesitation, or demand for further credentials, he did homage as to his Superior. With reverent adoration he fell on his face, and with prompt obedience he craved instructions—“What saith my Lord unto His servant?”

Here and now, this faithful but somewhat perplexed and anxious leader of Israel finds the solution of all his difficulties. Now he knows that God is indeed dealing with him as with Moses. Now has he the sustaining consciousness of the fulfilment of the promise, “The Lord thy God will be with thee.” As to who this was who appeared to Joshua, we need have no difficulty. The title He takes and which is given to Him by Joshua; His acceptance of Joshua’s worship; the hallowing of the place because of this occurrence; the fact that He is called Jehovah (Joshua vi. 2)—all show that here, as to Abraham, there is a Theophany; an anticipatory appearance of the Son, the second person of the glorious Trinity.

Here on the plains of Jericho the typical Saviour and the true, Joshua and Jesus, stand face to face. Yea, Joshua’s work at that time was the work of Jesus; was the work of Jesus so peculiarly and definitely that Joshua must wait on Him for instructions. Yes, strange and inexplicable though it may seem, this mission of Joshua was the mission of Jesus; of Jesus, who fourteen centuries later walked the selfsame acres with His blessed feet, continually doing good; declaring to the vilest that He came not to destroy men’s lives but to save them; rebuking His nearest friends when they asked Him to destroy an insignificant Samaritan village with fire from heaven. He who thus spake in such meekness speaks now with a majesty so august, that

the great leader of Israel must fall at His feet. He who came the lowly Lamb comes here the mighty warrior, with a sword of judgment drawn and gleaming in His awful hand. He who came to save comes to destroy. Truly did the prophet call Him "The Wonderful." How marvellous art Thou, strong Son of God! How high above our highest thoughts! How unsearchable are Thy judgments, and Thy ways past finding out! How little do we in our ignorance grasp the mystery of Thy nature! Oh, teach us to humble ourselves before Thee in this Thine adorable day of grace.

This vision makes very emphatic what was clearly revealed before, viz., that this campaign is under the Divine sanction and direction. Divine skill plans the work. Divine power carries it forward. Already the bearing of this campaign on the ways of God, on the state of the Canaanites, and on the interests of the human race, have been considered, therefore there is no need to refer to these things again. But inasmuch as He who ordained for Israel that campaign on those famous fields has ordained for us a campaign of another sort, spiritual and most honourable; within, in the battlefield of the heart; without, in the battlefield of the world, it will be profitable to look at the leader and the follower as here revealed, that we may learn how to fight the good fight of faith, and quit ourselves like men.

BEHOLD OUR CAPTAIN. We have a Leader in this great war. We are not left to fight alone; herein lies our comfort. Without such leadership sad would be our case. Once on a time we tried to fight the spiritual battle alone and unaided, only to be ignominiously defeated again and again. No man can make

headway against evil, within or without, except Jesus is his leader. But Him we may all claim. He would not leave us to our own devices or resources, for He knows the sure and fatal result of doing so. Looking at the difficulties and dangers of the fight, we might well be appalled ; but we are comforted when we think that we have only to follow. "He goeth before." We go not a warfare at our own charges. If Joshua was unfit for that conquest of Caanan by himself, how much more are we unfit for the fight against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. For Joshua Jesus came, "The Captain of the Lord's host." For us Jesus comes "The Captain of Salvation."

And it is a comfort to think that this Leader of the people is one of the people Himself. There is a bond of sympathy and connection between Him and us. He is "The man Christ Jesus." Our leader is one who knows us from experience ; one who is practically acquainted with all the conditions of the fight ; one who has experienced the sufferings of the campaign, and endured all the hardships of the struggle. In any war, which is the captain whom the soldiers love to follow ? He who shares their lot most closely—he who, like Skobeleff in the Turkish war, knows all their hardships and privations. He who sleeps with them in the trenches, eats the same coarse and scanty rations, and leads them into the thickest of the fight. Now, this great Captain of whom we speak acts in this very fashion. He has shared our lot in every particular, however hard, sin excepted. He is very man, and as such went and came among us. How much more highly favoured, therefore, are we than was Joshua.

Also, like the warrior that appeared to Joshua, our

Leader is thoroughly equipped for His work. His hand is drawn ready to smite. The word of truth is the royal weapon He wields in this war of grace and salvation ; quick, powerful, sharp, effectual. He puts it in the hands of every faithful follower and bids him use it well. Oh to trust it more, to try its heavenly temper on stalwart sin and brazen-faced iniquity ! What an honour it is to be allowed to use the King's own sword. The story runs that when Arthur lay a-dying, he took his famous sword Excalibur, miraculously wrought, miraculously given, and miraculous in its achievements, and commanded his last remaining knight, the bold Sir Bedivere, to take the brand and throw it far into the moonlit mere. The knight went out to do his master's bidding ; but it was such a noble blade, the hilt was such a miracle of jewellery, sparkling with diamond, jacinth, and topaz, that as he gazed upon it he could not cast it from him, but hid it among the knotted flags beside the lake. Returning to the dying man, he could not answer right the question put, and the king knew he had not done his bidding. Again he sent him to throw it in, and the second time the knight was so dazzled by its beauty, that again his heart failed him. Then the wrath of the king waxed hot, and he cried,

“ Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bowed the will. . . .
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence ;
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.

“ Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn.
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under the mere.”

Thus was lost to man the famous sword of Arthur. What a contrast to this legendary loss is the history of the sword of which we speak. Truly it was miraculously given and miraculously fashioned, for holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Truly its achievements are far above what mind can conceive or tongue declare. But no mystic hand brandished it three times, and drew it up to Heaven whence it came. Yea, rather with His own hand the great Captain of Salvation buckled this blade upon the thigh of each chosen messenger. During the forty days after His resurrection, one great part of His work was to open up the minds of those valiant saints to understand the Scriptures. And when He sent His Spirit on them, that sword in their hands did even greater wonders than in His own.

This is the one weapon He has put into our hands for this holy war. But alas ! with how many is the Bible like a sword sheathed, rather than a sword drawn. It is never used against the evil in their own hearts or in the world around. All their knowledge of its truth lies rusting, useless and unemployed. Our Captain in every encounter trusted only to this weapon. Can we find a better anywhere ?

Again, Jesus is our Leader in virtue of Divine appointment. This mighty warrior exhibited no credentials to Joshua. There was in Him a self-evidencing majesty which commanded submission. It is plain that He is set apart by God Himself to this office ; that He is our Leader by Divine appointment. "The government shall be upon His shoulders." "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." He is set apart to the work by the Holy Ghost given without measure unto Him. Around Him we must gather if we are to have any success in the inner or the outer fight.

Moreover, He is Captain in virtue of His own purchase. Not only is Jesus appointed to this high place ; He has also earned the right to it by His own blood. His life is the price He paid for His commission. Jesus has the right to lead God's people, because He has died for them. He is made perfect, as the Captain of Salvation, through suffering.

Also He is our leader because of His own resources. These are infinite. He is here called the "Captain of the Lord's host," for He marshals all the hosts of the holy angels, and gives them their appointed tasks. In the days of His humility He could at any moment have commanded the service of innumerable legions of angels ; and here he comes to Joshua as their great King and Commander. Therefore all material and all spiritual forces are under His control. Surely he was worthy to take the lead in the war which Joshua undertook, and in that which is set before us. Here He comes with the heavenly host to help the earthly ; and surely as far as possible the earthly should be assimilated to the heavenly, and follow the great Leader cheerfully, faithfully, steadfastly—doing His will as the angels do in heaven.

Lastly, we would say, He is Leader because of His qualities. He is an able Leader, thoroughly fit to command God's army, a true King of men always present, always ready. He is faithful to His word; wise in His plans; glorious in His achievements; ravishing in His perfections. His glory is so rare that whenever it is truly seen the heart accords Him undying homage and serves Him with unflinching loyalty. Despised He is by those who know Him not, but to those who know Him He is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. This is our Captain. Who would not follow Him? Lover of our souls! King of our hearts! What in the battle of life should we do without Him? Where could we get hope, courage, energy for the fight? What in the last struggle could we do if He did not say, "I will be with thee, my rod and my staff will comfort thee"?

See here also the FAITHFUL FOLLOWER. We know that Joshua stands prepared to follow this great Captain, because we remember his past obedience. Whatever He has said Joshua has done. He brought the people across the river in obedience to His command. He has made knives of flint whereby to roll away the reproach of Egypt. He has kept the great feast of redemption, he looks now for support to the fruits of the land. Thus, following closely in the path pointed out, Joshua stands prepared for further service. So is it always. By doing whatever duty comes to hand, under the eye of the great Leader, we prepare for higher achievements.

Joshua's heart is also in his work. He is not slothful and indifferent. He is not careless and unconcerned. He is not fearful and oppressed, with no stomach for

the fight. He walks forward with eager watchfulness, seeing that every preparation is made, that every soldier is at his post, that every sentinel is on the alert, that all things are ready. He leaves nothing to the chapter of happy accidents. Thus the follower of Jesus should be a willing worker, full of energy and watchfulness, ever on the alert to do whatever in him lies to extend the Saviour's kingdom.

Joshua is also brave. When this warrior started up before him, though he was startled, he was not unmanned. He is ready to challenge any neutral, whoever he may be. He will not quail before any foe, but is ready to show fight whenever it is required. So the warriors of the cross must ever be ready to add to their faith virtue. Without moral courage there can be no nobility of character, no strength of soul, no effective work.

And this brave man is also humble. He fell on his face before this majestic Presence. He was deeply conscious of the superiority of his Leader and of his own nothingness. He had no feeling of official pride or of injured dignity. He was glad to have the opportunity of putting unreserved confidence in a being so august. "Merit lives from man to man, but not from man, O Lord, to Thee."

Therefore his heart is also filled with reverence. He worshipped before Him. He took the shoes off his feet, for the place was holy. Men who have done anything great for God, men who have followed the Lord fully, have been always marked by a spirit of deepest reverence. The gravity, the solemnity of the work in which they are engaged, the consciousness of the Divine presence before which they walk, fills them with

awe. A man who is irreverent cannot be a great worker; an age which is irreverent cannot be famous. In these days irreverence is one of the greatest evils the gospel has to contend with, one of the saddest signs of a flippant and shallow generation. There is a spirit of levity abroad which, as it is indulged, saps the foundation of spiritual energy and puts a stop to Christian work. Those who do good work for Christ are serious while cheerful, earnest while happy.

Joshua was also docile and obedient. He put the question, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" And when he got the answer he did as he was commanded. The true follower is eager to know his Master's will, careful to carry it out. Unquestioning, prompt obedience is due to Him who commands us with such unerring wisdom, who leads us with such invincible might. God help us all to imitate this faithful servant.

XII.

THE FIGHT OF FAITH.

JOSHUA VI.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.”—HEB. ii. 30.

IN the history of this restless world we can read the record of many a memorable siege. Some of these have given splendid opportunity for the display of high principle, magnanimous self-sacrifice, and heroic deeds and endurance. Others have magnified human skill, courage, perseverance, hardihood, and wisdom. Of uninspired poems, perhaps the most widely read are those which celebrate a siege—the siege of Troy. Homer and Virgil have sung in noble numbers the praises of the heroes in that world-renowned fight. Their qualities, deeds, reverses, successes, as thus recorded, will live as long as such poetry has a charm for the human mind. But, after all, the principles which animated Agamemnon, Ajax, Achilles, Nestor, Ulysses, and others of these old-world heroes, were very commonplace. The play of human passion, headstrong, self-willed, fierce, implacable, impure, treacherous, constitutes the base, shaft, and capital of these poetic columns. The whole thing is of the earth earthy. It is the fight of the flesh that we witness, not the fight of faith.

In this chapter we have the record of a siege of

another sort, the description of heroes of a different spirit. In the capture of Jericho all these impure and earthly principles and passions are ignored. The heroes in the fight are high-souled saints of God who fight the good fight of faith. There an innocent city must be besieged for ten years because Paris ran off with a beautiful woman. Here, after a seven days' pause for possible penitence, the Lord's host executed judgment on a city of exceptional wickedness, because God's patience was exhausted. There in long works elaborated by the genius of the world's great poets we have many pictures that command our admiration. Here in one little line the Holy Ghost presents a picture far more marvellous and sublime, when He simply says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." Compare the two for a moment. On the one hand the long weary ten years' siege, and the trick whereby the city was won at last. On the other, the mysterious, silent, solemn, seven days' march round and round the city, the great shout, the levelled walls, the perfect victory. Do we not feel that, stripped of the golden haze which the genius of man has flung around it, the former dwindles down to insignificance and becomes commonplace, vulgar, sinful; while the latter stands out in its grand simplicity—"The Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes"?

Consider then this fight of faith; and first of all mark **THE FOUNDATION OF THE FAITH** whereby Jericho was overthrown. It was a well-founded faith, for it rested altogether on the Word of God. Faith never runs except it is sent (to do so is the evil habit of presumption), and therefore faith is very stout of heart. This fact is brought out in the narrative under

consideration. The division of the chapters here is unfortunate. The end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth should be united; the great Captain has arrived, and has given His orders to Joshua: "The Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets and rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him" (Josh. vi. 2-5). Joshua conveys the command to the people, and it is carried out in every particular. This command from Jehovah removes the act from the region of the irrational. Nothing could well have been more absurd than for Joshua to have acted as he did, on his own accord; but given such a command from God, then this was the only thing to do. "What are the marching orders?" This is the only question faith asks; if it is convinced in regard to this, it can command mountains to be plucked up by the roots and cast into the sea.

As it was in the siege of Jericho so is it in the siege of Mansoul. All must be done in faith, or nothing is done to good purpose. Faith asks what has God commanded? And the answer is clear as day: "Preach the word." "Testify of me." We have

something else to do than to defend the faith, or to apologise for the gospel; we have to prophesy over the dry bones, knowing that in the power of that word they will rise up an exceeding great army. How well did Paul comprehend this standing order; how perfectly did he carry it out; how emphatically did the event justify his steadfastness. "God sent me," he says, "not to baptize but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ should be made void." Neither to baptize nor to philosophise, but to evangelise, is the messenger of the cross sent, and the battlements of rebellion and sin will fall before no other power than this. "It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Christ crucified is the power and the wisdom of God.

Think also of **THE TRIAL OF HIS FAITH**. The faith of Joshua and his followers was tried greatly and in a variety of ways. To begin with, the means they were to use in order to gain the victory must have been a trial to their faith. They were to march, march, march round the city again and again in perfect silence. There was not to be a whisper in their ranks, till at last, after a silence protracted for a week, they were to give one united shout at the sound of the rams' horn trumpets, and then they were told the walls would fall flat before them. Would not the employment of such means as these have proved a stumbling-block to unbelief? Who ever heard the like, that they should act in a way so extraordinary, so unexpected, so exceptional, so different from anything in their former warlike experiences? The whole thing looked like child's play. The means seem to human wisdom utterly, ridiculously inadequate to the end in

view. They were to raise no mound, dig no ditch, direct no artillery against the city. Would not their marching round and round Jericho be a foolish waste of energy, the endurance of uncalled-for fatigue? Would not their strange silence betoken weakness, the weakness of hearts filled with fear? Certainly the means used were a trial to their faith.

Even so in our days faith is tried. What, it may be asked, are you to preach, preach for ever, to do nothing but preach? How can the ends sought, be attained by such means. The shouts of Israel will more easily cast down the massive stones in the walls of Jericho, than preaching Christ crucified will cast down man's thoughts or opinions, or permanently influence his conduct and incline his heart to righteousness. I could understand some power in connection with a gorgeous ritual, imposing ceremonies, and solemn ordinances; these have a legitimate place and power in the region of religious sentiment and in the formation of a religious character. I could also understand some influence emanating from a rational and wise discussion of great principles, for the elevating influence of lofty thought is unquestionable. But I fail to see that in preaching Christ crucified you can touch any intelligent soul with power. Such thoughts as these are very congenial to the natural heart, and the result is plainly seen in much of the religious service of our day. On the one hand we have crowds who, like the Jews in Paul's day, seek for "signs;" whose confidence rests in that which is outward and visible and tangible; on sacraments and ritual and imposing ceremonies; in the repetition of pious formulæ; in the observance of holy ordinances

and the frequenting of holy places. On the other hand, we have many who, like the Greeks of Paul's day, seek for "wisdom." They will tolerate Christianity only as it comes to them in philosophic guise, as one out of many ethical systems craving their patronage and their valuable intellectual support. Between two such influences, the faith of the true preacher of Christ is severely tried. Succumbing to the first he becomes a ritualist, a priest ; the pulpit is neglected, the font and the altar are exalted. Succumbing to the second he becomes a dispenser of stale philosophies ; he degrades the pulpit to the level of the lecturer's desk ; ceasing to be a witness, he becomes a babbler. Yet just as certainly as the victory over Jericho was gained by Israel's faithful adherence to the command of the Lord, so, in these days, lasting good is accomplished only as men preach the gospel in its naked simplicity, for this is the only power which God is using for the salvation of souls.

Again, it must have been a trial to Israel to wait so long. If going round Jericho is to accomplish the work, surely once round is as good as a thousand times. If one shout will lay the walls flat, why not shout the first day, and make short work of it ? To go round day after day, and seven times on the last day, must have seemed absurd to natural sense, as it must have been a severe trial of patience. Every stone in the walls of Jericho must have been photographed in the eyes of every soldier. And to walk round so often without seeing any effect produced must have also been a great trial. If they had seen some of the stones crumbling down every time they marched round ; if they had seen a high tower toppling the one day

and falling the next ; if the walls had gradually grown lower, like battlements of ice melting in the sun, showing the joints in the masonry and the honey-combed stones, then there would have been ground for increasing hope and little trial for their faith. But to march round again and again, and these walls to look as strong and far more formidable the last time than the first, must have been very trying. Surely they were tempted to think that their labour was in vain, that they were like men beating the air.

In the use of God's appointed means for man's salvation the faith of God's servants is often severely tried. To work hard from week to week, from month to month, from year to year, and see no good result, is very dispiriting. To hold out the hands all the day long, and perhaps for years in succession, to a disobedient and gainsaying people, is heartless work.

To try every mode of presenting the gospel, so as to reach the conscience and influence the life of those who hear, but never to see any good result therefrom ; to labour in some degraded district to elevate the masses by the leverage of the gospel, and to see them sink back like dry sand into their congenial degradation ; to teach in the Sabbath school with earnestness and diligence, and never have the assurance that one soul is savingly touched ; to train up the children in the family with careful pains and earnest prayers, and yet to find their hearts wayward and prone to evil,—all these are sad and trying experiences under which the heart is apt to sink discouraged and to ask, Is this gospel the true power after all ? For a cure to such faintness let us remember Israel. Though the result was delayed, there was no mistake made in that seemingly aimless

and useless marching. For twelve times the city was compassed and no effect was produced, yea, at the end of the thirteenth round the walls seemed as strong and terrible as ever. This was a great trial, but the patience and perseverance of Israel were gloriously vindicated in the end. So, in the long run, all work done under the eye of God and in obedience to His word will be gloriously vindicated. Let us not be cast down. One soweth and the other reapeth. In due season we shall reap if we faint not. Perfect victory comes soon or late to every soul who works in the energy of God's Spirit as God directs. Not only the walls of Jericho but mighty mountains are beaten small by the worm Jacob.

Still another part of the trial of Israel's faith must have been the thought of what their enemies had been saying and thinking. Perhaps they had marched so near the walls that they could mark the features of their enemies and hear in the still air their angry talk. See warriors clustering everywhere upon the walls. Though fear is in their hearts, jibes and jeers are on their lips ; yea, by their bluster they would embolden one another. We can well conceive how they would exercise their wits in criticising the appearance and work of the Israelites. Thus they would seek to strike terror into their hearts. And it must have been no easy matter for the men of Israel to listen to those taunts in silence for seven days in succession. Though nick-names break no bones, they are hard to bear, they are very powerful to irritate, and no doubt these Canaanites were masters in the art of verbal torture. Their tongues would have a tang that touched the quick, that burned like the sting of a wasp. Surely a sore trial those taunts must have been.

Say what we will, the opinions and thoughts of our fellows have an influence over us, and cause either gratification or discomfort. One of the severest trials to the faithful witness of Christ is his critics. Some of them are unfriendly, and their aim is to destroy his influence. Some of them are friendly ; and their purpose is to extend his influence. If he is a foolish man, weak in faith, he will be spoiled by either of them. The unfriendly will crush him, and make him a dumb dog unable to bark or bite. The friendly will destroy his individuality, and make him a poor, weak, colourless creature, a miserable caricature of the critic. What should he do then ? Despise these critics and their criticisms ? By no means. He should try to get all the good out of them that is in them ; and if there is no good in them pay no more attention to them than the Israelites did to the men of Jericho. Every worker of God must learn to do God's work in the way God has commanded him. Let worldlings mock ; let ceremonials despise ; let philosophers scorn—the preacher of Christ must keep right on, holding up the one Saviour glorying only in His cross.

As we look at Israel in its march round Jericho we also see a good example of THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH. How docile is every warrior in that wide camp ; how diligent in attending to the commands of Joshua and carrying them faithfully out ; how humble in cheerfully submitting to all that God has ordered, without a question or a murmur. They are not stiff-necked and rebellious, as their fathers too often were, refusing to obey what was commanded. They are not self-willed, and determined to modify the programme so as to make it more agreeable to their wishes or more consonant with

their ideas. They do not set themselves up as judges of God's plans, taking what pleases them and rejecting what does not. Whatever the Lord commands they do ; whithersoever Joshua sends them they go. Therefore this was no disorderly scramble round the walls of Jericho ; no tumultuous "Go-as-you-please," by Israel's warriors. It was a well-organized procession. It was like a regimental parade.

"Hearken to their steady stamp,
Mars as in their every tramp,
Not a step is out of tune,
So the tides obey the moon."

This order is their answer to God's command. They arrange their ranks, they march, they keep silence, they shout all in obedience to God. Without His sanction nothing is done. This is the obedience of faith.

We have need to imitate these warriors, and to remember that faith without works is dead. Faith develops itself in and by docility. Where would Israel's obedience have been, if it had refused to fall in at the word of command ; if it had neglected to keep silence during the seven days' march ; if it had refrained from shouting when the trumpet sounded ? And how inconsistent and unseemly would such wilfulness have been if all the time the people had professed great anxiety for the honour of God, and strong confidence in the downfall of Jericho. But how many in these days profess great zeal and high faith while walking in flagrant contradiction to God's will ; while doing His work in anything but His way ; while adopting plans and pursuing courses in which the world delights but which find no sanction in the Word of God. How much of the religious activity of our day, our modes of

collecting money, our manner of conducting worship, the tone of Christian society, is of the earth earthy! Need we wonder at our weakness? We can attain to victory, the Divine blessing can rest on our labours, only as we work according to the Divine plans, only as we obey His revealed will.

We have still further in the conduct of Israel before Jericho a display of THE COURAGE OF FAITH. Faith is brave as well as obedient. Displaying its banners in the name of the Lord, it can run through a troop, and overleap a wall. When the Israelites looked on these walls strong and high, they needed courage. The hearts of their fathers had utterly failed them when they beheld the like. Truly it would be no child's play to overturn that massive masonry. The longer they looked the more vivid was their conception of the difficulties they would have to encounter. This made the successive marches all the harder, a more and more severe trial of their courage. When the forlorn hope dashes forward to the breach, in the flush of excitement, and the headlong rush, difficulties are minimised and men are blind to danger. But these Israelites had plenty of time to see and ponder every difficulty; yet, notwithstanding, they did not shrink from obeying the Divine instructions, and surely that revealed good courage. Also, looking at themselves as well as at the walls of their enemies, Israel needed courage. They marched around that famous stronghold in a long thin line—as if marching past before friendly eyes in a review. How easily could a sortie have been made from one of the city gates, how easily could that thin line have been broken through, and the whole army put to confusion. It looked as if Israel was exposing

itself to unnecessary danger, inviting attack in the most foolish manner. It needed the courage of faith to act as God had commanded.

Often the tactics of faith seem at fault to worldly wisdom. Many difficulties and dangers threaten, and God's people do not seem prepared to meet them effectually. Faith never underrates difficulties ; faith never despises danger ; but obeying God it never quails before them, even when it is most exposed. Walking in the path of obedience, it knows that the Lord will preserve it from all evil, and therefore its heart never fails.

THE PATIENCE OF ISRAEL'S FAITH is also plainly shown. The faith of these warriors was enduring as well as courageous. It was not spasmotic and intermittent ; at full flow one day, and at the lowest ebb the next. They kept on at the work commanded day after day. This was like the finishing of their education so far as patience went. They had been well-trained in the exercise of this virtue for many years, and now it has its perfect work, in the trial that came upon them through the performance of that monotonous and seemingly meaningless task. Every instruction given was an exercise in patience. By these they were taught that "God is not pleased with any impetuosity men may manifest at their own hands, but above all, demands a regulated mind, of which the only rule is not to move tongue or feet or hands till He order." We have need of such patience in all the work to which God now calls us. Much mischief is often wrought by that natural impetuosity which rushes forward before God has prepared the way, even as much ground is often lost by that lack of patience which faints in the day of adversity, and gives in before the work is done. Only

by patient continuance in well-doing are great things accomplished.

In the case of Israel there was a special purpose in this patience, a gracious meaning in this strange march. Surely this six days' pause left all in Jericho without excuse. Surely their continued opposition was a display of unparalleled folly. How could their walls be a defence against Him who dried up the Jordan? How could these warriors face Him who brought the armies of Israel over dry-shod? What perversity, still to resist His Almighty power. What impenitence, still to abstain from humbling themselves before Him. But would God have spared them if they had repented then? How can we ask the question with the story of Rahab ringing in our ears? If He spared one who repented, much more would He have spared all. It was when the inhabitants of that great and wicked and doomed city Nineveh humbled themselves in sackcloth and ashes, God spared them, would He not have done the same to Jericho even at the eleventh hour? Because there was no penitence with them, there was no pardon with Him.

Though the faith of Israel was strongly tried before Jericho, still it was not without true ENCOURAGEMENT. Faith can always derive strength from some quarter; it can live where all else would die. The command of God would encourage Israel. No word that He speaks is vain. Though His purposes may be hidden and His way dark, very dark before the end is attained; yet His command is always light, and therefore imparts confidence. And in this case, coupled with the command as to what they were to do, was given a promise of what He would accomplish. His truth was involved

in the capture of Jericho. That can never fail, hence their faith had great encouragement.

Also the very way in which they marched would strengthen their hearts. They marched as God's people, with Jehovah's priests in their company, bearing the sacred ark of God's strength, before which all the might of man is weakness. The past wonders wrought by that ark would come to their memory and give them confidence in their mystic march. The sacred number seven, moreover, interwoven with their work, showed that there was order and completeness in the task set before them, even though they might not be able to discover them. In the Divine thought all was well arranged. Nothing had been overlooked. Thus the very number of their circuits would encourage them. Ay, and every time they marched round, their eyes would rest upon a secret sign which filled their hearts with hope. There, from one solitary window on the wall, dangled a cord of scarlet. At least one soul in that city believed them invincible and beckoned them on to triumph. Rahab's faith within, would be a great incentive to that faith without, whereby the walls of Jericho fell down. How encouraging to faith is faith, wherever found. It creates new life and imparts new buoyancy. Even the great apostle could be comforted and strengthened by the faith of the brethren at Rome, therefore he writes, "I long to see you . . . that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me."

Think lastly of THE TRIUMPH OF THIS FAITH. Imagine the scene. At earliest dawn the warriors of Israel muster, for they have a long day's work before them. Six times they march in silence round the walls. After

they have compassed it the seventh time, each man stands still, facing the city ; a chain of living warriors round it. At a given signal the priests place the rams' horns to their lips. For the first time the solemn silence is broken by the rude blare. Then from ten thousand throats rings out a mighty shout which rends the sky ; and lo ! the walls fall flat with a noise like thunder. Clouds of dust arise. Panic-stricken, the people crowd the streets, in fear that every house will fall. The warriors of Israel rush forward, each man straight before him. The fearful cordon grows smaller and smaller, and at last the blood-stained warriors meet in the centre of the devoted city, having left behind a broad red band of death wherever their feet have trod. Nothing in Jericho was left alive. Thus perished the enemies of Jehovah. Israel's victory was complete.

Behold in Jericho two things—the might of man, as revealed in these walls and towers and stalwart soldiers ; the wisdom of man, as shown in their watchfulness, their care and precautions. Behold also two other things ; the foolishness of God in that aimless marching round the city ; the weakness of God in the sound of these rams' horns, in the shout of these soldiers. See the effect ; the walls are a ruin, Jericho is burned with fire, the place is desolate. Learn therefore that the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men. As your closed heart, O sinner, is a little Jericho, so may the preaching of the Gospel, which to some is weakness and folly, be like the sound of the rams' horns and the shout of Israel's warriors, levelling all your pride with the dust and making free passage for the entrance of God's convincing and saving grace.

XIII.

THE CURSE OF JERICHO.

“And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.”—JOSH. vi. 24; also 1 Kings xvi. 34, and 2 Kings ii. 19.

AGAIN in the course of this history we stand before a heap of stones. Very different are these from those twelve piled up on Jordan’s bank a few miles away. These are the ruins of the great city Jericho. There they lie blackened by fire and stained with blood, an awful desolation. What mean these stones? They are tokens of God’s judgment. They remind us of His curse; a curse, pronounced by Joshua, despised by Hiel, fulfilled by Jehovah, and removed by Elisha.

FIRST, LET US LISTEN TO THE CURSE PRONOUNCED. “Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.” Therefore it was the Divine purpose to allow Jericho to remain a ruin. To this end He placed it under a ban, called it “Cherem,” *i.e.*, devoted to God, set apart to be destroyed. This great curse was not causeless. It was thus dealt with because exceptionally wicked and impenitent. The

greater the wickedness, the greater is the severity of God's stroke, the more conspicuous is the judgment. Such an act of destruction was clearly directed in that law which Joshua was to ponder day and night. It was the first city that Joshua had taken, and he was bound to act according to the directions laid down by Moses : "Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the Lord thy God : and it shall be an heap for ever ; it shall not be built again. And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand : that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of His anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as He hath sworn unto thy fathers ; when thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep all His commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord thy God" (Deut. xiii. 15-18). Joshua therefore had no choice as regards Jericho. Other conquerors for their own pride and self-glorification have ordained that fair cities should be levelled with the dust and their sites sown with salt. Thus was it with Troy, Carthage, Sidon. Joshua did this as he did all things, in obedience to the Divine command. Jericho was "cursed before the Lord," *i.e.*, from God's presence and by His sentence.

But did this dreadful destruction serve any good purpose ? Yes, truly. Here we have sermons in stones, far more intelligible and emphatic even than

those with which the book of nature is filled. To begin with, inasmuch as they are tokens of a just and long-deferred judgment on wickedness, they sound a loud note of warning to the impenitent. Especially do they display the terrible nature of the sin of idolatry and its consequent evils. They declare that it can be visited with no judgment too severe. Therefore did not these stones cry with trumpet tone "Beware of idolatry"? Would they not be impressive witnesses against Israel in every evil day of apostasy? And would they not also give encouragement to every faithful heart that strove to follow the Lord fully? To such they would speak in tones of confidence, "Trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. This is your only safe policy. Following it you can never fail, however hard and unlikely the tasks to which you may be set." Pious souls could read these words writ in large characters on every one of them, "Not by might, nor by power, nor by wisdom, but by faith is the victory won;" and the practical conclusion was plain: "Faithful to God, you can never know defeat."

Thus these stones would also emphasize the truth, that in the greatest triumphs and the most brilliant successes there is no room for pride or boastfulness or self-sufficiency on the part of man. Always these stones would say, "His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory." What a stimulus therefore to truthful and healthful effort would these stones become. Wandering among them in Israel's darkest days, faithful souls would gather new strength, as they meditated on the facts which these stones commemorated. They would come very near to the presence of the Almighty, and drink in that trust in His power and

love which makes even poor weak human nature invincible. Who knows but it was by the testimony of these very stones that the soul of the prophet Elijah was endowed with that sublime faith which, manifesting itself in such indomitable courage and Titanic strength, makes him seem almost superhuman ? God's anger and God's grace ; man's nothingness and God's might ; man's folly and God's wisdom, were revealed by every stone. Surely it was well to devote this city to these high ends.

Thus Jericho lay a ruin for over five hundred years. The surrounding valley was very fertile ; therefore a new city was in course of time built in the neighbourhood, and is spoken of under the same name. That this supposition is more likely than that which makes the curse extend only to the walls and gates of Jericho, may appear from the following considerations. The old city is spoken of as being utterly destroyed. The people were possessed of a good spirit of faithfulness all the days of Joshua and of those leaders who outlived him, and would not likely forget the curse, the words of which "Have a rythmical and antistrophical form ; which was probably adopted for greater solemnity and to impress them more deeply on the memories of the people." Also it would be more difficult to build a new city on the old site than on a new. It was most natural that the new city should take the old name. Tradition speaks of two cities ; and two heaps of ruins have been discovered in the neighbourhood. Thus it seems that this curse was regarded with awe for over five hundred years.

But the time came when THE CURSE WAS DESPISED. The record of this is given in the Frst Book of Kings.

It may seem incredible that a curse so plain, so terrible, so memorable, should be thought so little of, but when we read the Divine record we can clearly trace the causes of this sinful audacity.

To begin with, there was a popular cause for this despisal. It was done in a day when Israel's God was forgotten, when spiritual life was very low, when public sentiment was degraded, when open impiety reigned in high places, and only one solitary man stood out an open witness against the evils of the day. The very sins for which Jericho was destroyed were rampant and popular in Israel. "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him. In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun" (1 Kings xvi. 30-33). How significant are the words "In his days." There were many bad, but none worse than they.

It is also instructive to notice that the builder was a Bethelite. Hiel had come under the full influence of all the evil principles that were rampant. He was born and bred, he lived and died, at Bethel, the

metropolis of idolatry, the place in which Jeroboam had set up his calf. The general spiritual tone of the country was unspeakably depraved, the particular tone of Bethel was a still lower deep of iniquity. Therefore it was an easy, yea, a popular thing for Hiel to despise the curse. Many, no doubt, when they heard his project, would applaud him for his public spirit, and wish him every success.

There was also a sceptical cause which led to the despising of the curse. Unbelief was at the bottom of Hiel's impious act, as it is the root of every evil work. It was not in ignorance that Hiel sinned, for it is evident that the curse was well known. It was fitted to make a vivid impression on the popular mind and to live from generation to generation. From father to child the story of these stones was handed down, and in the days of Hiel it was spoken with as clear accents as in the days of Joshua. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down and by unbelief they were built up. This unbelief in the heart of Hiel may have influenced him in different ways. Perhaps he had reasoned thus. The curse, if there ever was any force in it, must have spent itself by this time. It is five hundred and fifty years since Joshua is said to have thus spoken, and whatever its effect may have been in the past, it can have none now. It must be paralyzed and powerless, a mere shadow, and who fears that? Unbelief forgot whose curse this was. It could not get beyond the lip of Joshua to the will of the changeless and Almighty Jehovah.

Or perhaps Hiel had said: It is nothing but an old wives' fable, unworthy of credence; an old-fashioned jingle, without a particle of meaning; an apocryphal

curse, to explain an apocryphal miracle: or at the very utmost, granting that it has some historical basis, it can be nothing more than the expression of Joshua's ill-nature and ill-feeling, and therefore is a fossilized manifestation of the narrow, bitter, bigoted age in which he lived. The supposition that it is a Divine proclamation is utterly absurd, utterly inconsistent with the nature of things. It would be neither just nor wise nor loving in God to do so. Such a curse as that does not commend itself to my conscience, reason, or heart, and therefore it is unworthy of credence. Hiel having stood in the way of sinners would not be long in sitting in the seat of the scornful.

And perhaps the governing and most potent of these concurrent causes was a purely materialistic one. Hiel may have said to himself and others, You see I am a practical man of business. I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's son. Profit not prophecy is my *forte*. I leave the latter to hare-brained zealots and austere fanatics like Elijah, and give all my time and strength to the former. I have been very successful in life, and have learned to look at things from a common-sense and business point of view, and I despise all that mealy-mouthed nonsense which influences sentimental souls. Now look, did you ever see such a splendid site? (Had Hiel lived in our days he could have drawn up a splendid prospectus for a limited-liability building company.) And what a delicious climate this valley enjoys; even in mid-winter the air is bright and balmy. And see, the building material is lying around, ready to be used. The site can be got for an old song, on account of that ridiculous superstition about Joshua, which has scared so many chicken-

hearted noodles. Do you shake your head and say there may be some truth in it? What care I? I see plainly how I can make money out of this. There has been a great rush towards building in our good King Ahab's days, and I believe the thing is to last. Since he has got his ivory palace at Jezreel, everybody that has a little money wants to live more comfortably, and I say, who am a plain practical man, that you can search the land, north, south, east, and west, and you won't get a better site for a city anywhere. This is not the first time I have thought of building here. I have dreamed about it a hundred times; I look upon it as the crowning achievement of my life; so don't talk to me about that ridiculous curse. Let doctors and prophets trouble themselves if they like about these old wives' fables, I'm a matter-of-fact builder. You to your books and me to my buildings, and every man to his own trade.

It was not so very difficult then for Hiel to despise the curse of Joshua; even so it is not difficult for any one to despise the curse of the gospel. It has a curse, though this may sound strange in the ears of some; yea, it is a terrible curse. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha;" *i.e.*, "Let him be accursed, the Lord cometh." This curse of Jesus, like that of Joshua, may easily be despised. Multitudes around are doing so. And as with Hiel so with them, there are popular reasons for despising it. This is not an age of great spiritual earnestness, though it is an age of much activity and of great material progress, as was the reign of Ahab. It is the effort of some to explain away all this curse; ay, and of some who profess to be ministers of this gospel; and the popular voice applauds them to the

echo. The spirit of the age, whether as expressed by common talk, or the newspaper press, or current literature, is in favour of such a despisal. There are also sceptical reasons which conduce to the same end. The record which contains this curse is old and not trustworthy, say some. The curse is decrepit and antiquated. The edge of the sword of judgment is blunt and its blade is rusty. The Lord is slack concerning His threatenings. We are too enlightened and liberal now-a-days to believe in these things. They are relics of the barbarous ages and of brutal systems of theology. Such a curse does not accord with the teachings of my consciousness; does not commend itself to my mind, heart, and conscience, therefore I cannot accept it. But perhaps the great reason why men will not take heed to this curse, is because they are so absorbed in the things of time and sense, that they can think of nothing else. The cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things choke the seed and prevent fruitfulness. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" these are important and pressing questions, demanding the most serious consideration; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," sounds, in the ears of many, the advice of folly. No wonder then that the curse of the gospel should be despised.

NOW NOTICE THE FULFILMENT OF THE CURSE. Hiel was full of his great life-work. The new city was to exceed any of the works which had made his name famous as an architect and builder. The plans have been drawn, the trenches have been dug, the stones arranged and prepared, multitudes of labourers engaged.

There is to be a grand opening ceremony at the laying of the foundation stone ; therefore the members of his family and his numerous relations and friends flock from all quarters. It is a most auspicious occasion. He is overwhelmed with congratulations at such a successful commencement of his work. Bright banners wave in the sunshine, garlands of flowers innumerable are heaped upon the stones. Musicians with pipe and tabor and trumpet make joyous melody. It is a proud day for the builder, and his heart is very happy. But in the midst of the ceremony, his firstborn is seized with a sudden sickness ; he falls in a swoon, and is carried away from the crowd. But by-and-bye a messenger with a sorrowful countenance returns and whispers into Hiel's ear, "Abiram is dead." It was a terrible blow, in this hour of his father's triumph to be cut down. But perhaps, his friends would say, the excitement of the ceremony was too much for him. He had never been very strong, and was complaining for some time, and this must have been heat apoplexy, a sunstroke. But though Abiram's death was a great interruption, the work must be carried on all the same. It cannot be stopped because death is busy. And so the labourers and the masons and the carpenters go on with their work from day to day, week to week, month to month, year to year, and the city grows apace. All who see it admire Hiel's handiwork, and pronounce it a masterpiece. At last it is all but finished. There is nothing left but the putting up of the gates. Absorbed in his great undertaking, he has been able to drive away ominous thoughts and what he calls superstitious fears ! But there is growing on him, as he nears the completion of the work, a nervous anxiety that he

cannot drive away. Time and again dark forebodings will oppress him, and he cannot shake himself free of them. On one thing he is resolved—there shall be no public ceremonial at the closing of the work, as there was at the commencement. He will superintend the putting up of the gates himself, and not permit any of his children to be present. As he was thus busily occupied at the finishing touch of his great work, a messenger arrived in hot haste from Bethel, fourteen miles distant, with the doleful news, "Segub is dead." Thus was the curse of Joshua concerning Jericho fulfilled: "Hiel laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord which He spake by Joshua the son of Nun."

Learn from this how faithful are God's words, the terrible as well as the gracious. No jot or tittle of His truth ever fails. His word may remain in abeyance for many years, but the lapse of time can never destroy its vitality, "The word of the Lord endureth for ever." See also how infatuated is unbelief. Hiel did not stop his work at the first stroke of punishment. He could find many reasons for the calamity without tracing it back to God, and this curse. When once the rebellious heart is fairly on the road of unbelief how hard is it to stop! Every blow hardens rather than softens. Behold also the bitter fruits of unbelief. Pleasant and profitable Hiel thought his work would be; perhaps this very speculation was more for his children's benefit than for his own; but the solemn narrative teaches that there can be no lasting profit for us or ours, if we run contrary to God's word, if we deny His will.

The curse of the gospel is as sure and far more awful than this curse of Joshua. We may consider it in its relation to individuals. In regard to the soul's salvation, how many, like Hiel, are building on a foundation which God has cursed. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." Seek not to rebuild the ruins of your spiritual nature on the foundation of dead works. That is a site which God has cursed, and only condemnation can come from the attempt to go against His will. We may also look at this in its relation to communities. How many Hiels are there in these days, busy rebuilding the abominations which our fathers threw down—priestcraft, idolatry, superstition. Did a curse attend Hiel's impious building, much more must a curse come upon these impious efforts! It was a happy day for the Anglo-Saxon race when, before that Reformation shout, the walls of Romanism fell flat. Woe, woe, to it if it yields its service and strength to these Bethelite builders! The God of Providence is the God of judgment, and pours out the vials of His wrath on impenitent and faithless nations during the progress of their history.

But we can turn to a more grateful scene, and consider THE REMOVAL OF THE CURSE. Jericho was rebuilt in disobedience to a command, in defiance of a threatening, and at the awful cost of the builder's children; yet it was not demolished. God had better things in store for it. His prophets and His people were permitted to dwell there, and though there was much that was pleasant and attractive in it, it was an uncomfortable residence. The curse seemed to hover over it and linger within its walls. As salt was sown on

ancient sites to render them undesirable for habitation, so the waters of Jericho were bitter and the ground barren. But the citizens bear with the discomforts, and deliverance is at hand. From the walls of this new Jericho they beheld a wonder exactly similar to that which its ancient citizens beheld five and a half centuries before. They saw the waters of that Jordan cleave before the coming of Elisha. The spirit of Elijah his great master evidently rests upon him ; and he comes to Jericho not like Joshua of old, with death and destruction, but with life and blessing, yea, with a gracious power, which will for ever remove the curse and make their city like the garden of the Lord.

In token of their faith they send messengers to Elisha, welcoming the prophet to their city, and praying him to care for their necessities.

“And the men of the city said unto Elisha ; Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth : but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters ; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake’ (2 Kings iii. 19-22). Thus the curse of Joshua is removed. Strange cure this ; the old curse met by the new cruse ; the old word of judgment removed by the new word of healing. “Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters.” How strange that the salt of the new cruse should abolish the bitterness of the old spring—passing

strange. Yet can we not here see the symbol of higher truth ? can we not see Jesus and His salvation in this strange action of that prophet so like Himself ?

Each human being is like Jericho. "The city of Mansoul," "The house we live in," is it not like Jericho, pleasant for situation, fair in its outlook ? Our powers and faculties of mind and body, the possibilities of our nature, are all that could be desired ; yet the water of spiritual health is naught and the ground barren. We are lying under a curse. But see, the Saviour comes. He comes through the waters of death, into which He had gone to bear the bitterness of the curse ; and as Elisha took this new earthen cruse from these men of Jericho, so He becomes partaker of our humble humanity ; He received of our nature a true body and a reasonable soul. Then becoming a curse for us—full of it as was the cruse with the salt, He removes the curse from us. The wonder-working wood for the bitterness of Marah and the wonder-working salt for the spring of Jericho, both picture that cross and passion by which Jesus has removed the curse.

Yes, and the world itself is also like Jericho. Is it not fair and beautiful ; most pleasant for situation ? Every prospect pleases. But there is a deadly drawback, "The water is naught and the land barren." Death reigns. The springs of spiritual life are defiled and poisoned, and therefore the human mind lies like a wilderness, waste and unprofitable. Many attempts have been made and are being made to cure the spring. Much attention has been given to this subject ; much labour has been expended in trying to mend matters ; much money has been spent ; still the sore evil remains. After teachers and philosophers,

and philanthropists and reformers and statesmen, have done their very best, what was said of Jericho may still be said of the world, "The situation is pleasant, but the water is naught and the ground barren." "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, *waiting*." Yes, waiting ; waiting the coming of Him who brings healing and life and fruitfulness with Him ; to welcome whose arrival all creatures will shout for joy, for there shall be no more curse. His presence will bless us with Eden again. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Knowing these things, who would not echo with heart and soul the apocalyptic "Amen !—Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

XIV.

A GREAT CRIME.

“The children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing.”—
JOSH. vii. 1.

THERE is a great contrast between the sixth and seventh chapters of Joshua. In the one Israel is seen triumphing gloriously, in the other failing ignominiously. In the one Israel is like Samson in his invincible Nazarite strength, in the other it is like Samson shorn of his locks, the sport of his enemies. From the victory of Jericho to the defeat of Ai how great is the descent! Well may this chapter commence with a portentous “But.” This pregnant little word is the hinge on which the door of this Divine history is hung; and as this door swings round, we pass from the bright, warm, cheerful room of faith and truth, of victory and life, to the dark, dank, dreary night of unbelief and lies, of defeat and death.

Yet all these things happened for our instruction, and here they stand recorded that we may be wise. The unbelief of Achan as well as the faith of Joshua may teach us invaluable lessons. This noble warrior acknowledging the glorious presence by his reverent obedience; this miserable dastard ignoring it by his greedy cunning, are both pointed out to us by the Holy Ghost that we may learn wisdom. In my native town, a seaport in Scotland, two means

have been adopted to guide the sailor in safety into its commodious harbour. First two lighthouses have been erected at some distance from each other, and they are so placed that they indicate the line along which it is safe to seek entrance. Accordingly the seamen in taking the river are careful to keep the two in one. But at the river's mouth there is a dangerous sandbank, and these lighthouses, as well as a third placed opposite on the Scurdy Ness, are useless to indicate its presence; therefore, on this Annat bank, there is anchored a buoy. And thus, by these two means, the guiding lighthouses and the warning buoy, the entrance is made plain and safe. By the one, the sailor knows what to seek, by the other he knows what to avoid. So here—Joshua is the lighthouse pointing out to the mariner the way of life; Achan buoys a sandbank where many souls have perished, and warns the voyager from the place of doom. How pains-taking is God in laying down our course. May we learn the double lesson He would teach.

In the chapter we have first of all the revelation of the great crime which led to the disaster at Ai; then Joshua's prayer and the indictment and instructions of Jehovah; and finally the discovery and punishment of Achan. The Divine indictment, as recorded in the eleventh verse, gives us the clearest conception of the character of Achan's crime, and therefore may well demand our attention in the first place. It runs thus: "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff."

The crime of Achan was therefore marked by DISOBEDIENCE. A plain command had been given to destroy everything in Jericho except what was to be devoted to the service of the Lord. And more than that, a most solemn warning had been given as to the results of possible disobedience : " And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord ; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord " (Josh. vi. 18-19). Such a warning, given just on the eve of the falling of the walls, and before the soldiers began their work, must have been most impressive, and hence, the disobedience of any would be all the more marked. And the remembrance of the solemn covenant between God and His people rendered the disobedience very aggravated. The act of Achan was a glaring breach of its conditions. The people as a people had put themselves under this covenant at Sinai ; and at Gilgal, by the renewal of the rite of circumcision, their covenant relation to Jehovah was very clearly emphasized. Moreover, as the first city that fell in Canaan, they were told that Jericho would be " Cherem," devoted altogether to God as a sort of firstfruits of the land ; hence, both from the general conditions of the covenant and the present particular application of its principles, Achan's act of disobedience was most flagrant.

It was also an act of THEFT, a breach of the eighth commandment. There was, on the part of Achan, a definite and deliberate breach of trust ; as much so as if the crime had been embezzlement or forgery.

Achan had no more right to take the silver and the gold than an accountant has to rob his employer. God had said to every one in the camp, "All that is in Jericho is mine." In this particular instance He had asserted His indisputable right to the possession of everything; but in spite of this, the love of money entered into and possessed Achan's soul, driving out all fear of God, and making him blind, hard, reckless. Alas! how often does it produce the same effect in these days.

And it is very plain that this act was deliberately planned and carried out. Achan's action was not that of a man suddenly overcome by temptation. He found the treasure in the course of the fight, or in the sacking of the city; he looked at it with admiring eyes, he coveted its possession, he determined to have it for himself. Accordingly he hid it in a convenient and carefully marked spot among the ruins. He retired from the city with his comrades, and then, when night had settled down, he stealthily slipped from his tent, evaded the guards, groped among the darkened ruins till he found the prize; and then, returning even more carefully than he went, he dug a hole in his tent and hid it there. His act was most deliberate. It was also inexcusable. There was no pressing want or demand bearing upon him to coerce right principle. It is evident that Achan was well to do; he belonged to an influential tribe; he was a comparatively wealthy man; therefore there was no excuse whatever for his conduct; it was the crime of a man "Greedy of gain."

DECEIT also characterised Achan's conduct. So is it always. Lying and stealing are twin brothers, inseparable. The words "Committed a trespass"

might be more literally translated "Deceived a deceit." The whole transaction occurred under cover of a cloud of guile. He not only stole, but also tried hard to cover his offence with craft. There was no confession of his guilt till he saw that concealment was useless. Up to the very last there was persistent dissimulation and the effort to keep the crime hid. How many lies must such a course of conduct have cost him! He dared not be silent, when the whole camp was in a fever of excitement on this subject.

Achan's conduct also revealed UNBROTHERLINESS. He wished in an underhand way to get the better of his brethren, and that was bad enough; it showed how utterly selfish he was. But he had also been warned that such conduct would be visited not only on the perpetrator himself, but on all the people (ch. vi. 18). Accordingly his act was unbrotherly and unpatriotic. The disastrous consequences that followed, clearly revealed God's thought as to the heinous nature of the crime, and as Achan was forewarned of this, his conduct towards others was most cruel and unkind. And let no one complain that the sin of one brought trouble upon all; for inasmuch as the people of God are one, God deals with them according to that fact; therefore every transgressor is not only a troubler of himself but of the whole house of God; his leaven leavens the whole lump. The people of God constitute a body, and this body, like the natural, may be injured either by the stroke of an adversary or by poison mingled with food. The previous chapter showed that Israel could be opposed from without; the present shows that it could be corrupted from within. That gave Israel's danger from open enemies; this gives

Israel's danger from false friends. The danger of dissolution through internal corruption, is just as real as the danger of destruction from external opposition. Indeed this narrative shows that the former is the greater evil. The real enemy of God's people is not opposing strength but inner corruption ; not the quibbles of the infidel but the carelessness of the Christian. The might of Jericho is nothing so long as Israel is faithful. Achan's wedge of gold was a more formidable weapon against Israel than all the swords of the aliens. The grand lessons here taught are, that while the holy are invincible, the defiled must be defeated ; and "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house."

Still further, Achan's conduct revealed INGRATITUDE. Perhaps the Divine command may seem severe, and the temptation to transgress very great ; but in the peculiar circumstances of Israel it is plain that it was far from insurmountable. For though many thousands were tempted that day, only one fell. This speaks well for the discipline and fidelity of the great mass of the people, but it tells all the more against Achan. When all the influences around tend to mercenary and selfish conduct, it may be difficult to stand upright ; but when all are helpful the crime of the fall is greater. Also, if this famous victory had been wrought by their own strength of arm, there might have been some reason for claiming the spoil as the victors' portion. But who was the victor here ? Most manifestly Jehovah. Accordingly, every man who abstained from touching the spoil ascribed the victory to Him to whom it was due ; every gift of gold and silver, brass and iron, laid at the feet of the priests for the service of the

sanctuary, proclaimed "Non nobis Domine"; but Achan's act marred that glorious tribute of praise and thankfulness; it was a little rift in the lute, destroying the melody. And this was all the more sad, because Jehovah was no hard master, eager to gather all to Himself and leave His servants as little as possible. Each of them will have plenty in good time. There is sufficient for each and all, and for their children after them. They are His heirs, for whom He has made abundant provision. Surely He may well demand the firstfruits as His due.

Lastly, Achan's deed betokened IMPIETY. It was the act of a godless heart. Could Achan have believed that God spoke true, when He warned the army of the evil that would come upon them, if they disobeyed His command? Nay, he did not believe the Divine word. Neither did he believe in the Divine knowledge. Whom did Achan conceive the God of Israel to be? One like the blind and deaf deities of Canaan—a god who could not see and understand. Notwithstanding all that Achan had seen and known of God, he acted as if a hole in his tent and the darkness of night could hide from Him. Perhaps he doubted His righteousness. The thing was too small for the Eternal to descend to notice. How sophistical is the human heart! as if the very fact that God had given a command concerning this matter was not a plain manifestation that He must adhere to its enforcement. Achan also despised God's power. He could not have believed that God was able to fulfil His threat, to carry out His word. Neither could he have any true belief in the Divine presence. How could he have acted as he did and yet have had a consciousness that God's eye was resting

on him as he did the deed ? Achan had amazing evidence of God's power and God's presence ; he had marched through Jordan's empty bed ; he had seen the walls of Jericho fall flat ; he would readily have repeated as part of his creed, that Jehovah was omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent ; yet such is the impiety of his heart that he acts as if all these were false.

The pre-eminent presence of God with Israel was the main aggravation of Achan's offence. His act was an invasion of God's rights before His very face ; the alienation of His property under His very eyes ; the devoting to private use that which He had devoted to His glory, and therefore it amounted to daring and impudent sacrilege. Is such a sin as Achan's extinct ? Is there no unjust getting in these days ? no "Getting of treasures by a lying tongue" ? Is there no undue grasping in these days ? has God no claim on any portion of what we possess ? How terrible is the love of money ! We have it on the best authority that it is a root of all kinds of evil ; and this history of Achan's crime seems an inspired commentary on that word. A gold coin is not large, but if put close to the eye it will shut out all the light of day and all the beauty of the world ; so, money hugged to the heart, will shut out as in Achan all practical belief in God's truth, knowledge, righteousness, power, presence. The Holy Ghost speaks not too sharply when He warns us against "Covetousness, which is IDOLATRY."

XV.

DEEP AFFLICION.

“ O Lord, what shall I say ? ”—JOSH. vii. 8.

WHEN Achilles heard of the death of Patroclus his grief was so great that he cast himself on the ground as one that could not be comforted.

“ With both his hands black dust he gathers now,
Casts on his head and soils his comely brow,
Foul ashes cling his perfumed tunic round,
His noble form lies stretched upon the ground.”

Here we have a grief similarly expressed, but more pathetic and noble. Behold Joshua and the elders of Israel, with rent garments and dust-covered heads, lying prostrate from morning to night before the ark of the Lord, dumb for one long day, in utter consternation and unspeakable grief. And when Joshua does at last find utterance, his words are startling for their vehemence,—“ Alas ! O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us ? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan ! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies ! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth : and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name ? ” (Josh. vii. 7-9). There is trouble in

the camp ; trouble which brings Joshua to the very verge of despair. We may well consider Joshua's trouble first, for though the consternation is widespread, his sorrow is the biggest and deepest, and the most largely dwelt upon.

Joshua shows here again that he was a perfect leader. In all the affliction of the people he is afflicted. He does not upbraid the spies for their bad advice, whereby he was influenced to send only part of his army against Ai. He does not storm at the soldiers for their cowardly and disorderly flight from the field of battle. He does not quarrel with his subordinates in authority for their incompetency. He humbles himself before God, blaming no one, chiding no one ; only anxious to get at the meaning of this sad mystery. All the feeling of dismay in the camp is concentrated as it were in him. His great capacity for leadership gives him greater capacity for suffering. Thus is it always. He who is most interested in the cause of Christ ; he whose heart is most enthusiastic, will be most cast down by defeat. The man whose soul is most sensitive to sin, most fully alive to the commandments of God and the demands of truth, has the keenest sensibility, and therefore suffers most in a region of rebellion. That is to say, the more real spiritual life there is in the soul, the more suffering must there be. As has been asked in anguish—

“ Is it true, O Christ in heaven, that the highest suffer most ?
That the stronger wander farther and more helplessly are lost ?
That the mark of rank in nature is capacity for pain ?
And the anguish of the singer makes the sweetness of the strain ? ”

The sorrow of Jesus is the deepest because the love of Jesus is the highest.

Joshua's sorrow, it is very plain, was sincere and unfeigned. There was no acting here. His long-continued silence, his loud wail, "Alas ! O Lord God," alike bear testimony to his deep sincerity. There are few things more repulsive than a counterfeited grief, an acted sorrow ; but there are few things more impressive than the deep manly grief of a noble heart that is almost breaking. Joshua feels this, one of the most solemn crises he had ever passed through, in all his eventful history.

And his grief was as unselfish as it was sincere. His chief sorrow is for the people. Their fate, their prospects, are his chief concern. His words are startling, and almost sound like "Irreverent remonstrance." But it is not so. He is on the very verge of murmuring, of speaking unadvisedly with his lips. But when we recall all the circumstances, we see that his words are only the vehement expression of a loving, unselfish nature, almost on the brink of despair. One little word is omitted in our translation, which modifies considerably the force of Joshua's words. "Alas ! O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us ? *and* (to lead us to say), Would to God we had been content and dwelt on the other side Jordan."

Joshua's perplexity is very great. This indeed is the biggest element in his trouble, and two parallel questions manifest it—"What shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies ?" (v. 8), and "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name" (v. 9). If things continue as they are, and lead to their natural issues, "What shall I say ? What wilt Thou do ?"

I have a difficulty in regard to my words. I have a difficulty in regard to Thy ways.

What shall I say? What conclusion am I to come to? What construction am I to put upon this event? Joshua makes no allowance for defeat. The chances of the glorious game of war, have no place in his reckoning. Though the defeat is small, the loss utterly insignificant in the eyes of any general, Joshua looks it upon as a rout, as if the whole campaign had collapsed. But was not this an exaggeration of the calamity? Not when we consider the facts of the case,—the promises made to Joshua, and the care and might already manifested. Joshua cannot reconcile this defeat, unimportant though it may seem to some, with three grand facts wherein lay his chief confidence. The fact of the Divine presence—“Is God with us after all?” he might ask. The fact of the Divine promise—“Has God indeed spoken?” The fact of the Divine power—“Is God able to give unbroken victory?” The sad fact of defeat seemed to go in the face of these other facts. But to Joshua these other facts were as patent as that over which he mourned, hence his consternation. He is dumbfounded. He can see no solution of the difficulty. Thus in a deep and real sense it is Joshua’s very faith which lands him in his difficulties. Achan had no practical and abiding belief in these things, hence his great transgression. Joshua had a deep pervasive belief in them, hence his utter consternation and deep sorrow. When brought face to face with facts that contradict these things, he can only rend his garments, prostrate himself before the holy presence of God, cast dust upon his head, and wail in anguish, “O Lord, what shall I say?”

And surely this noble sorrow, this believing consternation of Joshua, should be a reproof to many. We believe that there are individuals and congregations who would be more perplexed and confounded by a spiritual victory than by a spiritual disaster. Are there not many who would be utterly amazed, if the congregations to which they belonged, were broken down under the power of the Holy Ghost as were the thousands on the Day of Pentecost? They would not know what to make of it, much less how to meet it. Would it not be a matter of the greatest surprise and discomfort to some who profess and call themselves Christians, to have the church filled with anxious inquirers—children and parents, masters and servants, rich and poor, asking with equal earnestness that most momentous of all questions, "What must I do to be saved?" Yet surely there should be no cause for consternation in such an event; rather, when God's convincing and quickening power is not manifested, should we like Joshua humble ourselves in the dust before God and ask the reason.

But Joshua had a second question, which is the expression of a still deeper cause of perplexity. His first question, "What shall I say?" rose from his faith in God. His second question, "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" arose from his fidelity to God. It is as if He asked, "How wilt Thou keep the glory of Thy great name untarnished, by the floods of obloquy that will be poured upon it by the scoffing idolaters around? Our name may be cut off from the earth, but that is of little moment; still our name, little though it may be, is connected with Thy great name, and what wilt Thou do with it?" Thus Joshua's

second question becomes a powerful plea before God, commanding His attention and drawing forth a reply. And it is well to notice here for our encouragement in any spiritual emergency that in the very trouble of Joshua's soul there exists the germ of good hope. Joshua, just because he knows, feels, and owns his trouble before God, is every moment helping forward the solution of the difficulty. To know that we are beaten may be a bad thing in ordinary warfare ; hence Napoleon's complaint against the British troops ; but it is not so in the spiritual fight ; rather is it essential to continued success. Not to see and confess and mourn before God, our individual and collective failures, is to become hardened and unfit for the Master's service. If defeat ever comes upon us in the prosecution of God's work, it should be acknowledged as coming from the hand of God ; and it should be brought to God, while we humbly, sincerely, and earnestly search into its cause. Is it sin and unfaithfulness in ourselves, in our methods, in our aims ? Let us imitate Joshua in his godly sorrow.

But trouble came upon Israel as well as upon their leader. All the people must have been deeply impressed by the obtrusive grief of Joshua and the elders. Through all this long sad day a solemn hush must have prevailed in the camp, and a cloud of mournful gloom, of deep perplexity, and dire foreboding must have rested upon all. The burial of their brethren who had fallen in battle, the wailing of the widows and orphans, must have made them feel that they were under the ban of Jehovah. Had they not been blinded in their minds, adopting without hesitation the foolish and carnal counsel of the spies ? Had they not become

feeble in action, their hands weak to wield the sword, their feet swift to run from the fight ? Alas ! alas ! how are the mighty fallen ! How have their hearts melted and become as water.

As a single grain of colouring matter will tinge gallons of water, so one sin will affect a whole people. Achan's transgression influenced for evil the whole of that nation. His little leaven leavened the whole lump. No man can confine the effects of any sin within the small compass of his own personal experience. This narrative shows most emphatically and solemnly, that for good or evil the lives of all men are bound together, and that no one can live to himself.

This is a truth which needs to be made plain in these days, when individuality is apt to be pressed too far, and each one is too much inclined to cast from him all responsibility concerning his neighbour. In regard to physical evils, no one will dispute that in any community the act of one may injuriously affect all ; hence the attention that is paid to sanitary laws. But much more does it hold in regard to the moral and spiritual condition of men, for the germs of spiritual disease are far more subtle and indestructible, and far more easily spread, than those of any physical disease whatever. Just as in the heart of a rich city a collection of squalid and filthy dens may spread disease and death in its finest mansions, so the wicked, wherever found, become centres of spiritual infection, and no soul near them is safe ; hence, just as men wisely seek in self-defence to improve the physical conditions of the poorest dwellings, so should we, if for no other motive than the preservation of our own

spiritual health, labour in all directions, and in every possible way, to improve and elevate the masses. And if this principle holds in the body politic, much more powerfully does it manifest itself in the body mystic, *i.e.*, the Church of the living God. Here the influence of sin is most acutely and quickly felt. Hence the constant care that should be manifested in casting out every particle of the leaven of sin. He who takes heed to his own heart and life, keeping them clean and pure in the sight of God, edifies the brethren, and is health and strength and joy to all the body of Christ. He who is careless and sinful, must, like Achan, be a troubler of the house of God. Yes, and he himself must be miserable. For if Achan brought trouble upon Joshua and Israel, did he not bring the greatest sorrow on his own soul ? As Judas betrayed Jesus, to his own bitter shame and unrelieved remorse, so Achan betrayed Joshua to his own destruction. Could he have been comfortable or happy during that long dreary day of mourning ? What fear of discovery would rack his soul ! What nervous anxiety would unfit him for every ordinary duty ! Every footfall near his tent would fill his heart with terror. Miserable reward of iniquity ! Who can minister to that mind diseased ? And if it was so then, before any one dreamt that he was the criminal, what must it have been at the end ? The way of transgressors is hard. What joy had Achan in all his ill-gotten gains ? The rust of gold, like some strong Satanic acid, ate into his soul, to his unspeakable torture. Every transgressor sooner or later will find, like Achan, that in every sin lies its own punishment, and therefore escape is impossible.

And Achan's act had an evil influence upon the Canaanites as well as on himself and Israel. The effect of this defeat at Ai would be to harden their hearts, to make them persist in their rebellion. Their success in that effort against Israel would encourage them in the struggle. They would more easily find causes for the fall of Jericho. They would more confidently explain away the wonderful crossing of the Jordan. Thus Achan's sin, in bringing about such an issue, had a bad influence upon the Canaanites. Though again we must, with solemnized hearts, see in this narrative how God causes even the sin of wicked men to work His ends. Achan's iniquity paved the way to the Canaanitish success at Ai. The partial success of the men of Ai led to their ultimate destruction. Thus were the hearts of these Canaanites hardened as was Pharaoh's, and the just judgment against them executed. How often does the success of the wicked turn out their destruction.

Applying these things to the work of the Lord in our days, we are reminded by the effect of Achan's sin on these Canaanites, of the evil that is brought on the world through the unfaithfulness of professing Christians. How often do the men of the world harden their hearts, because there is an Achan in the camp! They cling with greater tenacity to that which is evil, aye, even with some degree of comfort, when they see those who profess to be better than other people, stumbling and falling. The world delights in affirming that pious people are hypocrites; and when a hypocrite is revealed, they grunt to themselves and neighbours, "They are all the same," and with new gusto turn to wallow in the mire of iniquity. Now this

opinion that pious people are given to lying and cheating and evil of every kind, is no doubt founded on the fallacy of magnifying a few glaring examples into a universal law, yet it is none the less potent; hence, the Christian should be continually on his guard not to bring dishonour on the noble name he bears. No doubt the encouragement which wicked men thus take is inexcusable, and calls for reproof. We may well say to such, "Your theory destroys itself; for if it were the case that religious men are as a rule dishonest, they would cease to obtain credit, and it would not pay a villain to assume a religious profession, and when it ceased to pay, he would cease to assume it. Therefore the averment that bad men make a profession of piety in order to cheat, goes to prove that pious men, as a rule, are honest." Yet still, inasmuch as the breakdown of a professing Christian is so potent for evil, and the world is so keen to take occasion for scorn, so ready to harden its heart, so glad to find an excuse for continued impiety at the sight of such failure, we cannot urge too strongly on all to take heed. We must remember that not only the honour of the Master and the prosperity of the Church are connected with our faithfulness, but also, to no inconsiderable extent, the spiritual state of the world around. Therefore let us take heed as we name the name of Christ to depart from all iniquity, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

XVI.

NEMESIS.

“They raised over him a great heap of stones.”—JOSH. vii. 26.

AGAIN we stand beside a heap of stones. Again it will be profitable to put and to answer the question, “What mean ye by these stones?” This is the third occasion on which such a question might arise. The first heap of stones was raised on the brink of Jordan; the second lay some miles distant; the third is still further in the land. The first heap was a token of Jehovah’s might; for taken from the river bed by twelve stalwart warriors, they told to all succeeding generations that by a strong hand and a stretched-out arm Israel was brought into Canaan. The second heap, stretched far and wide, the ruins of a famous city, was the token of Jehovah’s judgment. It told that the same strong hand that had heaped up the waters of Jordan levelled the walls of Jericho with the dust, and destroyed all therein. This third heap in the valley of Achor, the cairn erected over the dead body of Achan, was the token of Jehovah’s discipline. He who led His people over Jordan, He who destroyed Jericho, can tolerate no insubordination in His camp, Achan must die the death.

The twelve stones speak of Jehovah’s relation to the sin of those who trust Him and accept His leadership.

He buries all their iniquities, He brings them into His promised inheritance, and gives them a permanent place therein. The ruined city speaks of Jehovah's relation to the sin of these who stubbornly resist Him. He smites them with a rod of iron. He dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel. This rugged pile speaks of Jehovah's relation to the sin of those who profess to obey Him, but who in their deeds deny Him. If He judges the world, much more must He judge His own house. If the second heap points out the punishment of the rebellious, the third as clearly reveals the punishment of the apostate.

The twelve stones on Jordan's bank were a monument of Israel's hope. He who had led them over, and brought them in, would assuredly bless them with all earthly blessings in His fair heritage. The ruins of Jericho were a monument of Israel's faith. For nothing but faith could have been so patient, so docile, so mighty, so victorious—"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." The heap in the valley of Achor was a monument of Israel's love. They heaped up this cairn of condemnation to show their detestation of the crime of which Achan was guilty. They were so jealous of the honour and glory of God that they would tolerate nothing in the midst of them inconsistent with His holy presence. Thus this act revealed their love to God in the strongest light. By this third heap we stand, and as we do so, let us ponder the discovery of Achan's crime, its confession and its punishment.

Joshua gave himself no rest till he got to the root of this matter. Though appalled by such severe tokens of the Divine displeasure, he did not murmur against God, but persistently made enquiry of God. He did

not complain of God, he complained to God ; and his faithful persistency was rewarded. "Get thee up," said God at last ; "Wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face ? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them : for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed : neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you" (Josh. vii. 10-12). "Get thee up. My mind has not changed. My arm is not shortened. My word is not broken. Get thee up, for the discovery and punishment of this sin."

The discovery of Achan's sin was, therefore, the result of Divine directions. It was God who set everything in motion for the detection of the hidden criminal. God came to the help of His faithful and perplexed servant, and manifested the same wisdom and power against the evil within, as had been manifested against the evil without. If God had caused a reverse, it was not because He had ceased to care for Israel, but just because He loved Israel so well. It would have been the greatest curse for Israel, aye, and for Achan too, if while sin was indulged, all things continued prosperous. It would have led the transgressors to think that they might sin with impunity, and thus the infection would be spread.

The discovery was undertaken most solemnly, as a deeply spiritual and religious act. The directions from Jehovah ran thus : "Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against the morrow : for thus

saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you" (v. 13). Three times in the course of their history had the children of Israel been thus called solemnly to sanctify themselves. On the first occasion, it was at the foot of Sinai, in prospect of the giving of the law. On the second occasion it was at Jordan, in prospect of entering into the land. On the third occasion, it was here, in prospect of the discovery and punishment of the transgressor. To receive God's will, to enter into God's inheritance, to purge away transgression, such things demand the most thorough consecration. The work of spiritual discipline is a most solemn matter, not to be lightly or irreverently undertaken. It is assuming to some extent, the very functions of God Himself, the great Judge of all; and therefore at such a time and for such a work, His spirit should abundantly fill every purified heart. It is plain from the Divine record, that Israel went about this solemn work in the right way. There was no burst of ungovernable excitement and blind popular fury. With judicial calmness and religious reverence, the terrible drama was begun, continued, and ended.

It was also prosecuted deliberately. There was no unseemly haste or confusion. A proclamation was made in the evening previous, as to the manner of procedure on the following day; and then the carrying out of the process of casting lots, must have been slow and deliberate.

What a night must that have been for Joshua! How thankfully must he have laid himself to rest in

the blessed consciousness that as surely as the darkness of night would fly before the dawning day, so all his difficulties would vanish, and all the disgrace of Israel would be blotted out.

And what a night must that have been for Achan ! He must have heard the proclamation and the accompanying command for the sanctification of the people. Whatever the former boded, he was bound to obey the latter. It could not be avoided. But surely every ceremonial rite would make him shudder with affright. And when all was done, and he sought his lonely couch, what fears had come to rob him of his rest. The consciousness of his crime would make him toss in restless agony, would be as thorns in his pillow. He would feel as did another whose mental torture a great poet has described—

“ Macbeth hath murdered sleep, the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
Balm of hurt minds.”

Oh ! what a long, black, miserable night was that. The voice cried, “ Sleep no more,” and on the morrow, as with bloodshot eyes he took his place in the ranks of his tribe, what must have been his terror ! And then to mark the circle of condemnation closing upon him, growing less and less at each casting of the lot, he rooted meanwhile to the dark spot, its centre, till at last, pointed out by the finger of God, he stood alone, the incarnation of disaster and disgrace, the hateful object for every eye in Israel, the awful focus of their fiery indignation, burning into his soul one thought, one agony, “ We have found thee, O our enemy.”

The method of discovery was most impressive for

the people, revealing so marvellously the finger of God. Whatever the precise process of the lot may have been, and that is hard to discover, there was no difficulty, hesitation, timidity, uncertainty, or partiality in its carrying out. We can well imagine, without having recourse to the theatrical colourings of the rabbis, how at each step a more solemn hush must have fallen on the camp, and that the boldest must have stood with bated breath as the process neared completion and the culprit was at last revealed.

The fact that the people so readily fell in with this plan showed their hearty willingness to get rid of this great evil. The tribe of Judah, the most honourable and illustrious of all, was first taken ; and it is said that all the warriors of that tribe, at the announcement of the lot, drew their swords and swore they would never sheathe them till the criminal was slain. That was not the last occasion on which, in the company of the honourable and illustrious, have been found those who bring grief and shame.

The method of discovering the crime was also the most merciful that could have been adopted for the offender. It gave him time to think ; a blessed space for repentance ; an opportunity, if there was any spark of spiritual life within, to cast off the incubus of iniquity. Every step would serve to convince him how utterly foolish it was to promise himself secrecy in sin, and how certainly at the last God would discriminate between the innocent and the guilty, however for a little while they were involved in the same condemnation.

Thus Achan stands exposed in the sight of all Israel. Joshua, filled with unutterable compassion for the

trembling sinner, though absolutely certain of his guilt, has no harsh word to utter, but only seeks to win him to a right frame of mind. Nothing could be more touching than this venerable leader's words. He deals with him as a grey-haired father with a wayward son, urging him to the only course that in the circumstances could yield one spark of consolation. "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me" (v. 19). Achan breaks down under this unexpected kindness. He had looked for nothing but harsh reproof and unmitigated severity; therefore in broken accents he replies, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it" (v. 20, 21).

This confession is worthy of notice, and has some features which relieve the darkness of the scene. To begin with, it was voluntary. It was not extracted from him by undue pressure, much less by torture. Joshua takes for granted that, notwithstanding his great sin, still some sparks of right principle were left in the man, and therefore his appeal was addressed to the nobler part of his nature. There was here no extortion of a confession from unwilling lips. Joshua spoke in love, calling him "My son." It is evident that he has no personal ill-will, no hard spirit of revenge. He appealed to the glory of God. He pointed out that

by a full and frank confession Achan would acknowledge God's wisdom in finding him out and God's justice in punishing his sin. Thus Joshua manifested the truest kindness to Achan, for God has been pleased to couple the confession of the truth, with His glory and grace, in a way very remarkable and encouraging. Certain it is that an unconfessed sinner is an unforgiven sinner. Thus Joshua brought forth this free confession of Achan's guilt.

His confession was as full as it was free. The miserable man kept nothing back. He made a clean breast of it. He told everything. The course of his sin as described by himself is most instructive. Mark his words—"I saw," "I coveted," "I took," "I hid." Four sad steps are there, down which, alas! many a soul has descended to ruin, temporal and eternal. First the eye beholds; then the heart covets; then the hand is stretched forth to take; then the mind strives, with all the ingenuity of which it is capable, to conceal. Achan is conscious of the evil process, and feels that in all these things he has been sinning against God. At last he has been brought to a consciousness of the heinousness of the sin as committed against the God of Israel. His full confession shows that penitents cannot be too particular.

His confession was also personal. He felt that it was first of all, and above all, a matter between himself and God, and therefore, though others in all likelihood were sharers in his guilt (for he could not well have hid these things in his tent without the cognisance of his family), still he made no mention of them, he condemned none but himself, for he felt himself the greatest sinner.

Also Achan's confession was sincere. He did not attempt in the faintest degree to excuse himself. He pleaded no palliation of his offence. He made no allowance for himself, on the ground of extenuating circumstances. It is clear that at last he felt his act utterly defenceless; too true to be denied, too bad to be excused—"Indeed I have sinned." Was not this man sick of his sin?

Surely therefore in this confession we have a gleam of light thrown across the gloom of this narrative. Just as in a picture of this dark valley and its black pile of stones, we have seen one white bird hovering amid the gloom, so this confession is the white bird of hope hovering over Achan's grave, and relieving somewhat the blackness of its darkness. Some have indeed found further foundation for hope in the form of Joshua's sentence as pronounced in v. 25—"The Lord shall trouble thee *this day*," implying that while justice must have its course below, there was forgiveness for him above.

And assuredly no one need think that the awful manner of Achan's death implied of necessity his eternal perdition. It is not for mortal men to say that even sin so flagrant was utterly inconsistent with the existence of grace, especially when it was followed by such a full and frank confession. We must leave him, as did Joshua, with the Judge of all the earth, who doeth right.

His punishment trode swiftly on the heels of his confession. On hearing his words, that nothing might be omitted to establish his guilt, Joshua "Sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and behold it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they

took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord." Then he was taken outside the camp to the valley of Achor, and there stoned with stones till he died. Then after his dead body was burned, his ashes were placed beneath the rugged pile. This punishment was at once a solemn expression of the evil of sin, a vindication of God's truth and justice, a prelude to future victory, and a monument to all succeeding ages, declaring, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

We are also told that all Achan's substance was destroyed, that which he possessed, as well as that which he stole. What a poor prize had Achan then in the things he so much admired. That which should have been devoted to God being appropriated to his own use, brought a curse on himself and on all he had. No good ever comes of ill-gotten gains. Achan sought to add sinfully to his store, but all was swept away, and he along with it. God would not now accept these things for the service of His sanctuary. They were defiled. There are gifts which God cannot away with. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Stolen property can never be offered to God with His approval. The wages of iniquity He has expressly prohibited—"Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore or the price of a dog into the house of the Lord thy God, for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God." Zaccheus, publican though he was, was in the secret of the Divine thoughts when he said, "If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation I restore him fourfold." The restitution of that which is unjustly got is what

God demands, anything else is utterly abhorrent. The Church is far too ready in these days to receive money from any quarter, to raise money by any means, and still the old saying holds, "There be those who steal a goose and give the giblets in alms." What is the difference between the child who pilfers a few pence to put them into the missionary box, and the man who swindles the public wholesale and builds a church? Only this—the crime of the latter is immensely greater. Yet have we not heard the former severely condemned, the latter ingeniously condoned?

In regard to this punishment of Achan, the fate of his family deserves to be noticed. What happened to them? Two explanations have been offered. The first is that they shared Achan's sin and therefore shared his punishment. We may rest assured that, whatever was their fate, nothing unjust was done. The law expressly forbade the children being put to death on account of the parents' crimes, and Joshua was too well versed in that law, too upright, to allow any violation of it. As an instance of how two or more individuals may be involved in the same crime and share the same punishment, we have only to bring to our remembrance the parallel case of Ananias and Sapphira. Another explanation is that Achan's family were spared. This rests on the fact that there is a change from the plural in v. 24 to the singular in v. 25. Joshua took Achan and all his possessions and all his family to the scene of execution, but the punishment fell only on Achan, for Joshua said (v. 25): "Why hast *thou* troubled us? the Lord will trouble *thee* this day. And all Israel stoned *him* with stones, and burned them (his cattle and goods) with fire after they

had stoned them with stones." Whichever is the true explanation we may rest assured that the demands of justice were not ignored.

Thus we leave Achan, and surely as we stand by this heap of stones and consider his sad end, these words come to mind—"The love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Yet how popular in our day is the worship of the golden god; how many must have money by fair means or foul; riches they will have, though their gold and silver become cankered with a rust which corrodes both heart and flesh. "Achans there are in almost every camp—men in Church and State who under plausible address and pleasing manners and an oily tongue hide hearts grasping, covetous, selfish. Loud they are in their protestations of large-heartedness, but secretly turning everything to their own advantage. Such men are the gangrene of society, and were it not for the checks they meet with would eat out its moral and spiritual life." What shall we do then? It is easy to cast stones at these Achans, but it will be more profitable, if not quite so pleasant, to turn our thoughts to ourselves, and see if we have no root of bitterness that needs to be plucked up. It is an old and very common custom of human hearts to

"Compound the sins they are inclined to
By damning those they have no mind to ;"

therefore let us guard against the tendency, remembering this word, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone."

Looking again at this event, we are struck with the

parallelism between the early history of Israel as recorded in the Book of Joshua, and the early history of the Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The taking of Jericho corresponds in its mighty triumph to the Day of Pentecost, and the casting down of the walls of rebellion and prejudice through the proclamation of the gospel. Then the sin of Achan is strikingly paralleled by that of Ananias and Sapphira. The cause of transgression was the same in both, and the punishments present a striking resemblance. It was a salutary lesson taught both to Israel and to the Church. It showed that the God who dwelt among men was a consuming fire, that His judgment must follow shortly and surely on the heels of sin, and that holiness is the only source and secret of success in the work of the Lord. The time, place, and manner of all men's death are in the hands of Him who is Head of the Church, for at His girdle hang the keys of hell and of death. And now the life that we are daily forfeiting for our sins, He is daily sparing for His mercy. Is it singular then, that for the warning, purification, and solid triumph of His people, He once struck down Achan and again smote Ananias and Sapphira ? In either case dare we rebel against the penalty as undeserved, dare we carp against the lesson as too costly ? Let us rather ask, "Am I faithful to the Divine, pure presence in the Church ?" He is here, no less pure, no less jealous, no less powerful ; therefore God fill our hearts with the spirit of reverence and truth, of brotherly love and godly fear, lest like Achan we trouble Israel, being filled with deceit, greed, vainglory, and presumptuous impiety.

XVII.

THE RIGHT POLICY.

“Take all the people of war with thee.”—JOSH. viii. 1.

THE world as a rule fawns upon the fortunate and tramples on the fallen and unsuccessful. Against the man who is overwhelmed with disaster every dog barks ; there are none so poor as do him reverence. Once down, let him remain down, so say these miserable natures, thus showing the spirit they are of. It is one of the glories of God that He lifts up those who are cast down ; and the knowledge of this free and unfailing grace enables His people in their sorest straits to sing, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy ; when I shall fall I shall arise ; when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me.” Like the bright warm sunshine after a dark and chilly shower ; like the music of birds after the roar of the hurricane, came the words of Jehovah after the punishment of Achan—“Fear not, neither be thou dismayed : take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai : see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land : and thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king : only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves : lay thee an ambush for the city behind it” (JOSH. viii. 1, 2).

God spake these words to Joshua to give encouragement, to reprove an error, and to teach a lesson.

First of all these words were spoken TO GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT. It is very clear that both Joshua and the people required encouragement. By the defeat at Ai they had been thoroughly demoralized; their hands were weak and their knees trembled, because their hearts were filled with dismay and their minds with perplexity. Encouragement was needed and encouragement was abundantly bestowed. God began His address with the exhortation, "Fear not." This indeed constitutes the burden of comfort which it contains. God would renew Joshua's confidence; for this is always essential to success in the work of the Lord. Without holy confidence there can be no good hopes, no wise plans, no buoyant energy, no patient endurance, no successful campaign. Without this confidence all work is aimless, blind, haphazard; but with it there is light in the heart and mind, strength in the arm, firmness in the foot.

The fact that this was an old exhortation made it doubly dear. It was not the first time that God had thus dealt with him; and the fact that God repeats the very words which he had addressed to Joshua on a former occasion shows that He is dealing with him on the old grounds; as if nothing had occurred to break the communion, no sin at Jericho, no reverse at Ai; as if that whole chapter of sin and judgment had been blotted out and remembered no more. Thus God says, "Your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more." Israel's sin had been confessed, acknowledged, judged, therefore God is faithful and just to forgive it, thoroughly, absolutely. Behold therefore the tender-

ness of Divine grace. After we have failed, will God use us again ? will He take us back on the old terms ? will He speak to us the same words ? Yes, yes,—“ If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

These words of God also contain a promise. “ Ai is thine ” ; this is the pledge given. The city before which they had suffered this sad reverse, would become theirs as absolutely and more profitably than Jericho, “ The spoil thereof and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves.” The essence of the encouragement which Joshua received, lies in the fact that this promise was so sure and so sweet. It was sure, for God’s Word is never broken. The fairest appearances may deceive, like the mirage of the desert. The wisest forecasts of the future may be worthless, nothing more than beautiful talk. The surest promise of man is weak as a foundation of sand ; but when God promises, there is a sure foundation for the largest confidence, a rock tried and immovable. And it was as sweet as it was sure. It was the encouragement of a perfect love that had long been experienced and enjoyed ; a new outpouring of its glory most grateful and precious. How much had that love already done for them ! It had redeemed them, it had guided them, it had fed them, it had defended them, it had strengthened them, it had chastened them, and here is new proof that it will never fail them. The remembrance of all that we have received from the love of God makes every new promise doubly sweet.

But God thus addressed Joshua in order to **REPROVE AN ERROR.** In the attack upon Ai a grave mistake was made, a fatal error was enunciated. The advice of

the spies is entirely contradicted by this command of God. The spies had said, "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither, for they are but few." Here God says, "Take all the people with thee, and arise, go up to Ai." Accordingly this new command is a sharp reproof of former folly. Here God points out the error of division in His work, the error of thinking that part can do the work designed for the whole. This was the error into which Joshua and the spies fell; and this is an error into which the people of God are very apt to fall in these days. God's sharp reproof of the policy of the spies shows that this error is very serious. The policy of the spies was a policy of pride. They were elated with their marvellous success at Jericho; with that brilliant victory so easily won; and therefore when they came to look at Ai their hearts were filled with contempt. "It is a small place, with a handful of people. A few thousand men will make short work of it. It would be a useless waste of energy to set all the soldiers to attacking that miserable little town." Thus spoke the spies, with that pride that goes before destruction, that haughty spirit which precedes a fall. And the feelings which influenced them still possess the human heart. How dangerous is success to the individual, to the congregation, to the Church! Success unmingled with any drawback is a severe temptation. Blessed are they whose successes are so tempered with failure as to keep them from pride; while their failures are so balanced by success as to lift them above despair. When unqualified success is achieved, how apt are men to rub their hands with self-complacent pride; to

congratulate themselves on their wisdom and capacity in conducting the enterprise; to count up their resources and estimate their ability in the most flattering arithmetic. Especially is there a temptation thus to act when the results have been showy and the victory easy; when there have been large gatherings and a deep interest in spiritual matters, great excitement and many conversions. Then are the children of God apt to relax their efforts; to look with indifference, and perhaps with contempt, on plodding, unobtrusive, patient Christian work, *e.g.*, family training, Sabbath school instruction, house-to-house visitation. What is the use of such slow and prosaic methods of doing the work? What is the use of the rank and file troubling themselves about these things? Surely it would be better to leave the work in fewer hands, that it may be prosecuted by more brilliant methods. God save His Church from this policy of pride.

The policy of the spies was also one of ignorance and disobedience. Its adoption by Joshua and Israel shows that both the Divine design and the Divine command had been overlooked, or had been considered inapplicable to this particular case. The presence of the warriors of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh ought to have been a sufficient reminder of the principle that the children of Israel were to be one in this work. This policy of division was opposed to the Divine design and command. So is it now. God has never said to any of His children, "Son, go to church, enjoy the services, criticise the sermons, bury yourself in business and pleasure from Monday till Saturday." No, but He does say, "Son, go WORK." And He says that to every son whom He acknowledges. No

Christian can shake off his responsibility for personal service. And no one can buy himself off, for the conscription is universal. We cannot get rid of our responsibility by contributing so much money for religious and benevolent purposes. We must each put our hand to this work as we have opportunity, and if we do not, we show ourselves ignorant or prove ourselves disobedient. It is not the purpose of God that only ministers of the gospel and officers in His Church should speak of holy things and persuade men to embrace the gospel. He does not intend that they alone should visit the sick and afflicted, the widow and fatherless. He does not design that they alone should mourn over the pride and worldliness and selfishness of many who profess and call themselves Christians. He does not wish that they alone should see the triumphs of redeeming love. He does not desire that they alone should wear sparkling crowns of brightest glory for ever and ever. It is his desire and command that all should be thus occupied.

But I hear some one say, "If you set all the people to this work, think of the danger of indiscreet and ignorant advocacy of the truth; the harm that may be done to God's cause." What! is the way of salvation so exceedingly difficult to explain? As a child who knows the road from the village to the town can point it out to the ignorant traveller, so the veriest babe in Christ, aye, the veriest fool, can point out the way of salvation to the greatest genius who knows it not. Though the way is narrow it is very plain. Do you know the Gospel at all that you are so timid in trusting it to such? No doubt there are things in it hard to be understood; no doubt it is a fatal mistake for

every one to set himself up as an unfoldier of these hard things, a teacher of babes. But we speak now not of mysteries, but of the A B C of Christianity, the means whereby the soul is saved. This is no mystery, but the plainest of plain revelations, which a child can speak, and the feeblest understanding comprehend. And it is God's design and command that every one who knows this should testify to this. Surely He knows best whether it will suffer harm by such treatment. Why should you be more careful of it than God? Have you no confidence in this plain Gospel? Is it such a poor weak thing that it can only stand the delicate handling of trained theological experts? Away with such folly to the moles and the bats. The words of God in His gospel are spirit and life; and even in the case of the most lofty and sublime genius who has ever consecrated his gifts to the proclamation of the gospel, they were a treasure in an earthen vessel; does it matter so very much, then, that the vessel is very homely, of coarse material, and perchance of grotesque shape, with here and there a crack and flaw?

But if you will look at fanciful danger, think also of real good that will be done by every man saying to his neighbour, "Know the Lord." To begin with, how much good will it do to the speaker himself? In no better way can he so effectually obey the gospel command, "Add to your faith virtue." Thus he confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus, as well as believes in his heart, and the result is a great spiritual impetus towards righteousness. Think how careful and prayerful such an exercise will make the child of God. I once urged a farmer to take part in a little meeting which was held in his neighbourhood every Lord's day;

he hesitated a good deal, evidently thinking over the matter seriously, and then with great naïvete revealed his thoughts in the words, "Well, sir, if one did that on the Sunday, he would require to live very carefully during the week." "Exactly," I answered; "and therefore for the week-days as well as for the Sundays, I would like to see you engaged in this work." Thus obedience to this command is one of the best means for growth in grace.

Again, it is very natural for those restless beings who have imbibed the doubting spirit of the age, thinking it the badge of a superior intellect, it is very natural for such, to think that the ministers of the gospel have a selfish interest in upholding the present state of things; that they speak merely as advocates engaged on one side of a controversy; and that therefore their highest arguments are but special pleadings in a doubtful case. And however strongly we protest against such insinuations, and cast them from us with indignant remonstrance, it is questionable if we can ever entirely remove the evil bias. But let another approach that individual, one who has no such public or official relation to Christianity, and speak the selfsame truths, the effect will be very different. If only the men who take up positions antagonistic to Christianity could be induced to visit the children of God in their affliction, and mark the power of that gospel which they so despise, their mockings would cease, they would be convinced that there was a Power there, higher than any with which they were acquainted, and more blessed; and assuredly even from their hearts Balaam's wish would rise, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Moreover, this policy of the spies was a policy of inconsistency. In adopting it Joshua fell from his own model. He had begun in the spirit and was continuing in the flesh. The taking of Jericho was the pattern for faith to follow. There, there was no division. All the people marched round the city, all the people shouted at the sound of the trumpet, all the people rushed, every man straight forward, and finished the work. How inconsistent, therefore, was Joshua to ignore that perfect pattern and follow this foolish advice of the spies. But has not the Church in her spiritual conflict with evil departed far more foolishly and fatally than Joshua from the pattern given by God. What is the model set by God before His Church in the prosecution of the campaign of salvation ? Without dispute, the Day of Pentecost. And what were the characteristics of that day ? Unity of spirit, unity of labour. If ever the policy of division was legitimate it was then, for they had apostles specially endowed by the great Head of the Church ; they had the marvellous outpouring of the Holy Ghost ; yet in Samaria, Damascus, Cyprus, Antioch, Rome, the work was commenced and continued by means of the rank and file in Christ's army.

Likewise, this policy sprang from presumption. Joshua in listening to the advice of the spies acted according to the dictates of carnal wisdom. These men think they know how to conduct the campaign better than the commander-in-chief. If all the people go against Ai they will tread on each other and be a hindrance rather than a help. If all the people quit the camp there will be a useless expenditure of energy. It is absurd to use 50,000 men when 5,000 are quite capable

of doing the work. So they argued ; and so the modern descendants of these wise spies say, " Not all the people." If all are engaged in this work, many mistakes will be made, much energy will be wasted, much folly will be wrought, much injury to the good cause will be done. What ! Has not God ordained that all are to take part in this campaign ? Let us take heed, then, lest in our wisdom we perchance become guilty of presumptuously opposing God, who has ordained by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Certainly it is delightful to see zeal well directed, but any zeal for the good of souls is better than lethargy, indifference, death. That young man blundering and murdering the Queen's English, aye, and perhaps losing both his argument and the clear gospel in a mist of declamation, and making bad worse by seeking to hide his confusion by shouting commonplaces till he is hoarse,—that is certainly not a pleasant picture. But see, there is something infinitely worse. What ? That smirking, clear-headed, self-complacent, kid-gloved idler, who has never sighed over the sin and sorrow of his fellows, nor sought to stretch out a helping hand to save them. To direct educate, enlighten zeal, should certainly be our effort, but to decry the energy of one sincere soul, is to presume against the wisdom of Him who took fishermen from their nets and tax-gatherers from their desks to be the evangelists of a world lying in wickedness, and who has from the beginning ordained praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

Still further, this policy of the spies was a policy of infatuation. That Joshua entertained this proposal and acted on it was a sign that for the while he was left

to himself on account of that sin which had defiled all Israel. Its unanimous adoption by the people (for both those who went to Ai and those who stayed in the camp signified their approval of it) was a clear token of the Divine displeasure, and brought its own punishment in the universal disgrace which followed. Thus does God often deal with men when they will not hearken to His voice. He makes them eat of the fruit of their own ways. May we ever be saved from such infatuation. What injury may we do ourselves, what disgrace may we bring on others, if we act on this divisive principle! Religious communities which adopt this policy degenerate in the long run into synagogues of Satan ; become spiritual carcases, having only a name to live while they are dead.

We have read in history how sometimes the much-enduring peasantry of Scotland, goaded to madness by the tyranny of their oppressors, roused themselves to resist them, and, armed with scythes and flails, and axes and coulters, faced a well-armed soldiery and sometimes put them to flight. What though their weapons were homely to grotesqueness, what though to the proud eyes of their enemies they looked but a rabble, every man was a hero because of the spirit with which he was inspired. Will our blood take fire when we read the record of their noble deeds, and can we be cold and indifferent to a far more noble fight we each should wage ? Let it not be so. Who will be a traitor to the great Redeemer ? Who will be the craven crouching slave of sin ? Let us fall every one into the ranks of this great army of salvation. Let us buckle on the sword of the Spirit. Let us march to the attack on Satan's citadels with united front ; and we,

also, like Israel, will divide the spoil and share the glory of the victory.

And lastly God gave this command to Joshua in order TO TEACH A LESSON. Jericho was taken in one way, Ai in another ; therefore methods may vary, they are not stereotyped, cast-iron rules, which cannot be altered. There are essential and there are non-essential elements in the mode of conducting the Divine work. It is essential that all God's people should take part in the work. All were employed at Jericho ; all were to be employed at Ai. It is essential that there be organization and arrangement. It was an army, not a rabble, which did the work at Jericho ; so was it at Ai. Thus, universality and organization seem indispensable to the successful prosecution of God's work. Combining these, we might say that the essential conditions of success in the Church are found, when all are working in the right place for Jesus.

Some magnify organization at the expense of universality. It not unfrequently happens with such that spiritual life is strangled with ecclesiastical red tape. Whenever there is much wrangling over trifles and forms there can be little spiritual power. Life is the first importance, then order. I have heard of a young vine whose fruit-bearing powers were for a time checked by the tightness of the ligatures with which it was bound to its supports ; so even wholesome rules, if they exert undue pressure, may destroy the very end they were intended to serve.

Again, there are others who are tempted to fly to the other extreme, and would magnify universality at the expense of organization. Such would cut the ligatures which hold up the vine, and leave it sprawling on the

ground. . There are multitudes impatient of all restraint, whose rebellious spirits fret against the discipline of orderly Christian fellowship. Such are free lances in the Christian army. There are others influenced more by selfish motives. Thinking to rid themselves of the inconveniences and burdens that must fall in measure upon all those who are banded together for Christ's work, they seek to be on friendly terms with all, while connected with none. They are not active, useful members of any Church, yet they may be called honorary members of all the churches. Such ideas prevailing would destroy all subordination and organization in the Church, would turn the army of Christ into a rabble, and put an end to united action. Rule, discipline, organization are essential to the wellbeing of the Church, and if used so as to impel "All the people to work," each in his particular sphere, must be beneficial.

But there are non-essentials also. There are great diversities of operation in this army of the cross. God does not always act exactly in the same way. He has different modes of reaching the human heart and conscience in different ages, in different countries, and among different classes. What is suitable in one set of circumstances may be very unsuitable in another. It is a huge mistake to think that there is only one mode of attack on the fortresses of sin. It is a grievous fault to condemn one for not adopting exactly the same tactics as another. Paul lays down the right principle here when he tells us that he became "All things to all men," that he might save some. When Dr. Duff settled first in Calcutta, and, after careful and prayerful deliberation, began his work in what he considered the

wisest way, he encountered a fierce storm of opposition and abuse. He was told, in words more forcible than thoughtful, "You will deluge Calcutta with rogues and villains." But how triumphantly have the results justified his Christian sagacity and high-souled determination to persevere! Some of those who looked with most suspicion on the movement at its commencement, became in the long run its warmest advocates and supporters.

Sometimes we hear the question put, Why do we not have miracles accompanying the preaching of the gospel in these days? Why cannot the ambassadors of Christ heal the sick or speak with tongues? To ask such questions is exactly equivalent to asking, Why did not Joshua take Ai in the same way that he took Jericho? And the answer is the same in both cases—because it pleases God to do the work in a different way. But whatever the means adopted the result is always the same. Let there be an enlightened recognition of the special requirements of each case; let there be a faithful heart-adherence to essentials; let there be a thorough separation from sin, and there must be the manifestation of Divine power. May we learn the lesson of complete submission to the will of God, so that we may always do His work in His way!

XVIII.

THE OUTSTRETCHED SPEAR.

“ And the Lord said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city.”—JOSH. viii. 18.

“ Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.”—JOSH. viii. 26.

A SPEAR outstretched, outstretched by Divine command, outstretched till the doom of Ai was sealed—what means it? IT WAS THE SIGNAL OF PRUDENCE. Plans had been carefully prepared for the capture of Ai, and that spear, probably with a pennon hanging from its head like the weapon of the Lancers, was a pre-arranged signal for the carrying out of these plans. The outstretched spear would have been useless, meaningless, apart from the plans to which it referred. But it was most important when these are taken into consideration. The stretching out of that spear was the pivot on which the whole of that day's work revolved. Therefore we may justly look upon it as the token of all the tactical skill of Joshua. His operations were thorough, skilful, soldierlike. First he appointed 30,000 to operate directly against Ai. Then he found it expedient to tell off another 5,000 against Bethel. The main army remained with Joshua. He took skilful advantage of the geographical features of

the district to gain his end. A valley stretched before Ai, having steep hills on each side. Once inveigled out of the city, its warriors could not easily escape to the right or to the left, because of these acclivities ; they could not go forward, for the greater part of Joshua's army was there to drive them back ; they could not retreat, for the ambush which Joshua prepared rushed in between them and their city, and thus they were caught in a trap, hemmed in on every side. This outstretched spear proclaimed the decisive moment for this movement. How eagerly then would this signal be looked for both by those in ambush and by those falling back before the rush of the men of Ai !

In the great war we wage against evil within and without, God desires us to use all the appliances of wisdom and prudence. Nothing that sanctified wisdom and sagacity can suggest is to be ignored. Nothing that prudence has proved to be an effective course of action is to be set aside. The Church must have all her wits about her in attacking the great enemy in his strongholds. We need more prudence, wisdom, inventiveness, and strategic skill in prosecuting this holy war. In this connection Paul calls himself crafty, and the Church in these days stands much in need of such consecrated craft as he displayed. How wary is the fisher as he angles on the stream, taking advantage of every bush and tuft of grass, of every passing cloud and gentle ripple ; and the more the waters are fished the more wary and ingenious is he. Oh for a holy ingenuity, a sanctified sagacity in winning souls ! Oh that the dictates of prudence were more faithfully carried out in the sanctification of the soul ! How few habitually take that glorious Book of Proverbs, that

treasury of sanctified common sense, as their *vade mecum*, their indispensable guide through the intricacies of life. When we go into a strange country, how we delight in a good guidebook. What enjoyment it adds to the tour; what a stock of information it enables us to amass. How many obscure beauties and interesting objects, easily overlooked, does it bring to light! At every page we find new proof of the care and accuracy with which it has been compiled. He who wrote this book knows every inch of the ground over which we are passing. We come to look upon our "Baedeker" as one of our best and most indispensable friends. Such a guide-book is the Book of Proverbs, and the more closely it is studied, the more carefully it is observed, the pleasanter and the more prosperous will be our journey through life.

Again, that outstretched spear was the sign of OBEDIENCE. While much was left to human prudence, certain Divine principles clearly laid down must not be traversed. Joshua must not in every respect do as he pleased. There was a circle within which wisdom might have free and full play, but beyond that circle he dared not go at his peril. The advice of the spies was a stepping outside that circle, and the result was defeat. But here some interpose a difficulty, and say that only 30,000 warriors went up against Ai. That cannot be, because in ver. 1 we have this command: "Take *all* the people of war with thee;" in ver. 3 we read that Joshua obeyed this command, and "Arose, and *all* the people of war to go up against Ai;" and the details of the battle, especially as given in vers. 9-11 and 15, show that Joshua took good care to have all the people with him as in the capture of Jericho.

But not only was there a general obedience to this Divine command, there was also a very special and definite act of obedience in connection with the outstretched spear. Joshua did not do this when he pleased, but waited patiently till he got a clear intimation of the Divine will that the time had come for striking the decisive blow. Thus Joshua's act in stretching out the spear was well-timed. He did not go before, he did not lag behind, the Divine providence. Surely that was a very good thing to do, but yet it is a very hard thing for human nature. How much of our action, even when we mean well, is ill-timed. We need the same patient and punctual obedience which Joshua manifested. We must not be like the horse, going before, or the mule lagging behind, and therefore requiring the bit and the bridle of God's providences. We must not be like Moses, who when he was forty was too fast, and when he was eighty was too slow, to obey the Divine command. Let us be like Joshua here, led by the eye of God to a well-timed obedience.

This spear was also A SIGNAL OF ATTACK. Its waving pennon cried to those in ambush, "Up and at them!" it called to those who were retreating, "Turn and smite!" and it shouted to all of them, "Retrieve your lost honour, win back your laurels." How many deeds of daring were the answer to that signal. Every sword leaped from its scabbard at the sight; holy enthusiasm and high-souled courage were kindled in every breast. Every common soldier in Israel was a hero that day, a noble brother of the man who waved that spear aloft.

Oh for like courage and energy in the wars of the Lord, for noble deeds done against deadly sins! We also have an outstretched spear, which should be a

far more potent stimulus to us. Behold it in the hand of that Roman soldier who stands beside the cross. Behold it piercing with sharp point the dead Saviour's side. Oh, sacrilegious deed ! oh, cursed enmity ! Yet see, it brings from His broken heart the purifying water and the atoning blood, in mingled streams of sorrow and of love, to meet man's wanton wickedness. Gaze then on this great sight, this blood-tipped spear, that broken body. Ponder this mystery till some of its meaning pierces and pervades your soul. Look till you can cry—

“ Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Yea, gaze upon it, and gaze again, till you feel your heart burning within you, eager for the fray, steeled against all sympathy with the sin that brought your Saviour there.

If the spear of Joshua roused the men of Israel to that hard fight, surely, surely, this spear with its purple pennon should rouse us to an inextinguishable hatred against sin, and a determination to exterminate it root and branch. If the gaping wounds of a dead Cæsar were dumb mouths pleading with overpowering eloquence for vengeance, what shall we say to the wounds of a dead Saviour ? O Lamb of God ! By Thine agony and bloody sweat, by Thy pierced side and that mingled stream, fire our souls with highest courage, that we also may do wonders in our fight of faith.

Joshua's spear was also THE MARK OF CONFIDENCE. Without hesitation, without fear, Joshua stretched forth the spear. He had perfect confidence in the word which God had spoken, the new promise He had given in grace. He did not think because he had once failed

that he would fail again. He had no foreboding of defeat. Not with nervous, trembling, fearful hand did he hold it aloft, but with the firm, sure grasp of perfect confidence. From the vantage-ground on which he stood, he ordered the fight, as again an assured victor.

Thus should we engage in the war to which we are called—with sublime confidence, sure of victory, aye, even after we have experienced defeat. Let us never indulge the craven spirit which says, “I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul.” So should it be in the inner fight, for He who has begun the good work will perfect that which concerns us to the praise of His glorious grace. And so should it be in the outer. Never let us dishearten ourselves or our neighbours with the thought that we are fighting a losing battle. The very idea is blasphemous ; as if man or the devil, or both, were stronger than the Almighty. What saith that great warrior in this fight, the chief of the apostles ?—“The God of Peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” So fight we, not as those that beat the air with aimless blows while we tremble for defeat, but as those whose victory is sure, because the battle is the Lord’s.

That outstretched spear may be also looked upon as A MEMORIAL OF MERCY. As Joshua held up that spear on the hill-top, and looked down on the hosts of Israel fighting in the valley below, could he keep his thoughts from wandering back to the momentous past ? Forty years ago—the scene is as vivid as if it had taken place but yesterday—forty years ago, he who stands the leader of Israel on that mountain brow, had unsheathed his virgin sword, and for the first time faced the enemies of the Lord, the fierce and disdainful children of

Amalek. He remembers well every feature in that tough fight, and the remembrance makes the fire flash from his eagle eye, makes the blood bound through his veins, makes him clutch the spear with firmer grasp and wave it aloft with fiercer energy. All alone he stands, but the God of Moses is with him—Jehovah of hosts, Jehovah mighty in battle ; and the remembrance of that past victory gives him glorious encouragement. As certainly as Amalek fled before the Lord's hosts, so certainly will the men of Ai. Victory is sure.

In the spiritual warfare how stimulating is it to bring to mind past victories ; to remember how David and Paul ; Luther, Calvin, and Knox ; Wesley, Whitefield, and McCheyne, wrestled with evil and prevailed. But above all, the remembrance of hard-won victories in our own experience is pre-eminently fitted to encourage. In that past fight of affliction, when sorrows mustered like the hosts of Amalek, in that time of sore temptation, when evil was swarming in the air, how glorious was the victory which God vouchsafed ! Has He grown any weaker ? Has He grown less loving ? Nay, nay ! He will still sustain. He will still grant us the victory.

“ Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His sweet promise to help me quite through.”

Again, Joshua's spear was THE SYMBOL OF PERSEVERANCE. No doubt Joshua remembered how the battle with Amalek swayed forward and backward as the rod of Moses was elevated or depressed ; and this perhaps explains the fact that he never drew back the spear till the work was finished. As if his hand had been glued to that spear he held it aloft, and thus he urged his soldiers to look like himself to the God of Sabaoth, who alone giveth victory. We have seen

the battle well begun, with prudence and obedience, courage and confidence. See it nobly continued and ended with stubborn perseverance. From this vantage-ground and with this uplifted spear Joshua urged on the soldiers to the fight. He gave them and himself no rest till the warfare was accomplished. And all the while that heaven-pointing spear called to Israel, "Look up ! Fight under the eye of Jehovah."

Oh for such a spirit in the fight of faith ! Alas ! how few endure to the end. How many that begin right valorously fall out of the ranks altogether, while others if they keep their places give but few and feeble blows. God keep us from this faltering spirit, God give us men of mettle and of might to buckle on the gospel armour, to draw the sword of the Spirit, and wield it till it cleaves to their hand, to hack and hew the flesh within, the foe without, and never cease till victory is won. What wins the fight ? Perseverance and energy going bravely on in spite of weariness and pain. Therefore—

" Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
 Ye soldiers of the cross ;
 Lift high His royal banner,
 It must not suffer loss.
 From victory unto victory
 His army He shall lead,
 Till every foe is vanquished,
 And Christ is Lord indeed.

" Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
 The trumpet call obey ;
 Forth to the mighty conflict,
 In this His glorious day.
 Ye that are men now serve Him,
 Against unnumbered foes ;
 Let courage rise with danger,
 And strength to strength oppose."

That outstretched spear of Joshua was also THE

OMEN OF DOOM. It hung over Ai like the great sword of the angel over Jerusalem. The men of Ai flattered themselves on a second easy victory. But when Joshua's army made as if they were beaten, and fled by the way of the wilderness, and all the people in Ai were called together to pursue after them, they only rushed from their city to certain destruction. Suddenly, at the appointed signal, retreating Israel turned on its enemy, the ambush sprang to their feet, and rushing into Ai took it with ease and set it on fire. Then ensued the terrible slaughter of the Canaanites, for "They were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side, and they smote them so that they let none of them remain or escape." The king was taken alive, and was kept till the battle was finished and the city burnt and overthrown, and then he was hung on a tree till sundown, when his carcase was taken down and buried at the gate of the city under another great heap of stones.

Thus these men of Ai perished miserably before the Lord. And it is worthy of notice that these men were not without resources. They showed great zeal and enthusiasm in defending their city, rising early to go out to fight. They also displayed far greater courage than the men of Jericho, for they marched against overwhelming odds. They also showed considerable wisdom in acting on the offensive, and not waiting to be attacked like their neighbours. It is also plain that they believed that union was strength, for they got the men of Bethel to unite their forces with theirs in the attack on Joshua. They also had great confidence in their success, emboldened as they were by their previous victory.

They had all these qualities, good in themselves, but all useless because on the wrong side. Their zeal was misdirected. Their courage was unavailing. Their wisdom was fruitless. Their union was powerless. Their confidence was blind. Yea, all were disastrous. All combined to make them rush with greater haste on the doom their sins deserved, on the punishment which God had prepared.

To have zeal, courage, wisdom, union, confidence, is not enough. You may have all these, and like the men of Ai have them and exercise them on the wrong side. The all-important question is, On which side are you? Are you on the wrong side? Then cast down your weapons of rebellion. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little. Are you on the right side? Then "Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life."

XIX.

EBAL AND GERIZIM.

“Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal.”—JOSH. viii. 30.

IN the course of this history we are constantly meeting with surprises. The transitions from victory to defeat and defeat to victory; from courage to fear and fear to courage; from warlike action to worshipful repose; and from worshipful repose to warlike action, are very sudden and very unexpected. Nothing perhaps is more surprising than the present episode. The sequence is so unexpected that some have not hesitated to say that this narrative is an interpolation, and that it belongs by right to a later stage in the history. This is a very rough-and-ready method of dealing with the sacred story, by no means to be commended. It will be safer, and more consistent with reverence for the Divine record, to look at it patiently, and consider it closely, if haply we may discover how it fits in with the Divine action that precedes and follows it. Here, there is no remarkable difficulty at all. If we only keep our eyes and ears open, as we accompany Israel on this journey, and mark what transpired, we shall have little doubt as to the seemly character and natural sequence of the events described.

FIRST NOTICE WHERE WE GO. We go to a distant place; about a week's journey from Gilgal. Why do we go there? To take some strong fortress? To fight some great battle? No, but to worship Jehovah, and to take formal possession of the land in His name. But it is a formidable thing to move all the host of Israel so far as that. It is; but no trouble is too great that serves to show our loyalty to Jehovah. Surely then, an important lesson lies at the very threshold of this narrative. The worship and service of God are not to be pushed back into the odd and obscure corners of life, as if they were of little account. They are never to be crowded out by business, however important and essential it may be. Daniel found time, amid the care that yokes with empire, and Israel found time, amid the care that yokes with conquest, to wait on God. What a reproof is this to those whose religion costs them nothing! who seek to serve God with the miserable fag-ends of time—the odd intervals of a busy life, or the poor dregs of the evil days of nature's decay. There is no fear of any man's temporal interests suffering by due attention to the spiritual.

Yet on the other hand it must be allowed that there are some who may be called sanctimonious loafers, and who under cloak of greater godliness neglect plain duties. Have we not seen some who would gad about from meeting to meeting in a continuous round of religious dissipation, and all the time neglect their homes and allow their business to look after itself? And what was the result? Difficulties and embarrassments which brought a scandal on religion. Unctuous prayers pay no debts; and while upon the most honest,

diligent, and upright embarrassments may come which draw forth all our sympathies ; for such religious idling there should be nothing but unmixed contempt, and the urgent cry, Stop your prayers and attend to your business, for “ The deed ye do, is the prayer ye pray.”

Turning again to Israel, we notice that they went to a dangerous place. Ebal and Gerizim lay right in the heart of their enemies' land, and certainly it seemed strange that the whole people should venture so far from their base of operations. To the natural eye it would look very like folly. Why should they sheathe the sword for a single moment in such a fight, so honourable, so profitable, so prosperous, so necessary ? And why should they do so when everything was going so well and so much remained to be done ? Why march a company of religious worshippers to that distant valley, instead of a mighty army to destroy every foe ? Surely prompt action, preventing their enemies from amalgamating their forces, is their only policy. Nay, to wait on God is better. Israel has learned that it has no cause to fear from the performance of anything that God has commanded. Man is only weak when he disobeys.

And they go to an appointed place. This makes the march wise and profitable. This journey was taken in obedience to the solemn instructions of Moses, and had a special bearing on the formal possession of the land in Jehovah's name. From being defiled Canaan, resting under God's curse, it is to become the inheritance of Jehovah, the holy land which He delights to bless. Therefore Joshua is careful to obey this command of Moses at the first opportunity ; and

whenever the way is opened up by the fall of Jericho and Ai he led the people to this appointed place. As Noah's first act was to take possession of the new world in the name of God ; so at the first opportunity Joshua took possession of Canaan in Jehovah's name. Let us do with like speed and fidelity all that God commands, seeking first "The kingdom of God and His righteousness." Perhaps it may be difficult to do so, yea, it may seem to the eye of sense very dangerous, nevertheless it will be our wisdom to imitate Joshua. The faithful and successful follower of God is one

"Who holds no parley with unmanly fears,
Where duty bids he confidently steers,
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
And trusting in his God surmounts them all."

Still further, this was an appropriate place to which Israel marched. It was appropriate, whether we consider its past associations or look at its position in the land. It was here that Abraham, the father of Israel, built his first altar in the land that God had promised. What more appropriate, then, than that his children should first come here, and as inheritors of his faith and piety, as well as of his promise, rear their altar and worship the unchanging Jehovah ? It was here that God Almighty vouchsafed to the father of the faithful that first interview in the land, giving him there the sure promise, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." How appropriate then that the seed of Abraham, led by the Almighty, should march to this place, formally to receive the inheritance from His gracious hand. It was here also that their father Jacob buried the false gods found in his household,

pурging it from idolatry ; how seemly then that his descendants, rooting out idolatry from the land, should come here to consecrate their service to the Lord. It was here that Jacob bought ground and dug a well which remains to this day, leaving it in faith a heritage to his children's children. And here they come, the possessors of all that was promised ; their feet shall stand on this earnest of the inheritance ; they and their little ones and their flocks shall drink of their father's well.

This rendezvous was also appropriate because it was so central and so beautiful. All Palestine lies stretched at the feet of him who stands on the top of Ebal, the view from Pisgah scarcely surpassing it. Due northward first Gilboa and then Tabor rise ; while far away over the shimmering waters of the Sea of Galilee, Mount Hermon, the advance-guard of goodly Lebanon, rears aloft his snowy crest and bounds the northern view. Eastward the rolling grassy downs of Bashan, the heights of Ajalon and Gilead, and even the purple mountains of Moab, are seen stretching from north to south ; while between the spectator and them lies that strange gorge, sixty miles in length by four or five in breadth ; through which the restless, troubled Jordan twists and twines, with fantastic sinuosity, wandering in that constricted area two hundred miles ; as if, like many a human heart, dreading the descent from the sweet sea of living water to that bitter barren sea of death before, it would lengthen its course well-nigh fourfold, and thus put far from it the evil but inevitable end. Turning our eyes westward, we behold the heights of Carmel and the fruitful plains of Sharon, while the great Mediterranean stretches its blue expanse to-

wards the setting sun. We are in the very centre of the land of promise.

The place is also very beautiful. If we look more closely we perceive that a limesome range of hills runs north and south, forming the backbone of the land. Where we stand this backbone is cleft by a valley, running east and west, which is flanked by twin heights, whose bases are 500 yards apart, and whose summits rise 900 and 1,000 feet above the valley. The higher to the north is Mount Ebal; the lower, on the south, is Mount Gerizim. The bold valley that lies between is of surpassing beauty and fertility. Travellers cannot find language with which to picture faintly the delightful scene. Mahomed called it the fairest spot on earth; and many have named it the Paradise of the Holy land. In spring or early summer, the season when Israel arrived there, it bursts upon the view like a vision of fairyland. Nearly a hundred springs burst from the slopes on each side, and crystal streams dance down the terraced steps, to wander with low, sweet music everywhere, and spread fertility in every nook. There are no rough and tangled thickets, but fresh green grass and welcome shade of oak and terebinth and mulberry; and above all the olive trees, so delicate in colour and so picturesque in form, flourish supreme, the unquestioned masters of the vale.

No greater contrast could be conceived than that presented by the scenery of Mount Sinai, where the law was first given, and that of Ebal and Gerizim, where it was repeated. The former is stern, still, and forbidding, without speck of green or sign of life. This is smiling and verdant, vocal with the songs of innumerable birds, laden with the fatness of the olive, the sweetness of the

fig, the luscious richness of the vine—the most inviting spot the heart of man can conceive. Here the traveller, enchanted by the indescribable air of tranquillity and repose which hang over the scene, pitches his tent beside the purling and pellucid rills, and however anxious to renew his journey, feels he would gladly linger days and weeks in such a paradise. Such is it even now, as described by those whose eyes have rested on it—what must it have been in those days of Joshua ?

This is the place to which Jehovah leads His people. This place of consecrated memories and surpassing beauty is the appointed rendezvous, the trysting-place of love, where His people will renew their vows, and looking round in rapture hear Him say, “This is the land which I sware unto Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, saying, I will give it to thy seed.” What a reward for all their labours, what a stimulus to consecrated energy !

We have accompanied the children of Israel on their long march from Gilgal to Ebal ; now let us stand on this vantage-ground and take note of **WHAT WE SEE.**

First of all we behold the ark, as conspicuously prominent as on the day that Israel crossed the Jordan. Now as ever, it is the centre of Israel, the glorious symbol of the presence of Jehovah. As we look upon it, we are reminded of Egypt and His great deliverance ; of Sinai and His holy law ; of the wilderness and His glorious marching ; of Jordan and His mighty entrance ; of Jericho and His glorious victory. When Moses hesitated to go to Egypt, God encouraged him with the words, “Certainly I will be with thee,” and He gave him as a sign and assurance of this fact the promise,

"Ye shall serve God in this mountain." And when, with that redeemed host, Moses actually stood on Sinai, and worshipped God as He had spoken, what a deep consciousness must he have had of that Divine Presence! Even so must it have been with Joshua and all Israel, as they stood around the ark of the covenant in the very heart of their enemies' land, in the very place where He had appeared to Abraham, in the very place where Jacob had worshipped Him. All his words are truth and verity, Yea and Amen. The Holy Presence of which that ark speaks has never failed them, has never forsaken them.

We also behold an altar here. This was the greatest gift the Holy Presence could bestow, because it was the means whereby He could dwell with them and continue to bless them in spite of their sins. How can the holy God dwell among a defiled people? That altar gives the answer. The altar is for the ark. The blood of the one sprinkles the mercy-seat of the other, and thus sin is purged; God can dwell among the people, and say to the sinful, "There will I meet with thee."

This altar was constructed of rough stones, untouched by any instrument of iron, and therefore spoke of the work of Christ as divinely finished, requiring not any addition or improvement that man's wisdom could suggest or man's skill accomplish. Man touches only to pollute. To introduce into the worship of God devices of our own is at once to vitiate that worship and make it hateful to God.

This altar was pitched on Ebal, the loftier height, from which the curses came. There it was set to remove the curse; for apart from the sacrifice of the altar which God has provided, all flesh are under the curse

of the law. There was no trembling here as at Sinai, because there was an altar here, which spoke of the curse borne and removed. Without that altar the Amen of the people would have been the seal of their condemnation.

On this altar were offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings. The burnt offerings spoke of Christ offered to God, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour ; yielding a perfect and glorious obedience to all that law, which He thus magnified and made honourable. The peace offering spoke of Christ as the centre and substance of rest, delight, and refreshment to God and man ; the glorious means whereby communion is restored and maintained. God and man delight in the same sacrifice, are sharers in the same feast. Thus the ark and the altar, the Holy Presence and the Perfect Sacrifice, guarantee to Israel all the glory of God's inheritance.

Behold the imposing scene. The elders of the tribes stand with Joshua and Eleazar and the priests in the centre of the valley beside the ark. The tribes stretch outward, like two dark wings, on either side in compact masses. The warriors of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, Benjamin, crowd the slope of Gerizim on the left (Deut. xxvii. 12) ; while those of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Dan, and Naphtali, rise tier on tier on the side of Ebal to the right (Deut. xxvii. 13) ; and the mixed multitude, the women and the children, extend along in front of the ark into the plain beyond. Then, when all were in their places and solemn silence reigned, the Levites read aloud the curses of the law, and the men on Ebal responded with a deep Amen, like the sound of many waters. Again the clear notes of the Levites rise as they recite the

blessings, and like the sound of harpers harping with their harps, comes the joyous Amen from the slopes of Gerizim. But could such a ceremony as this be intelligently participated in by such an immense concourse of people? Those who have visited the scene of this event say that there would be no difficulty, much less impossibility, in doing so. "A single voice may be heard by many thousands shut in and conveyed up and down by the enclosing hills. In the early morning we could not only see from Gerizim a man driving his ass down a path on Mount Ebal, but could hear every word he uttered as he urged it; and in order to test the matter more certainly, on a subsequent occasion two of our party stationed themselves on opposite sides of the valley, and with perfect ease recited the commandments antiphonally."

But there is still another object for our eyes to rest upon. As a lasting monument of that great event, Joshua put up great stones on Mount Ebal, plastered with plaster, and having written upon them "A copy of the law of Moses." What we are to understand by this, is not easy to decide with certainty. Some have supposed that it was the six hundred and thirteen commandments, statutes, and rites contained in the Pentateuch; others, that it was the Book of Deuteronomy; others, that it was the whole law. And none of these suppositions are inconsistent with the narrative. Joshua was well acquainted with the Egyptian monuments, written all over with hieroglyphical legends, and if it had been so desired the whole of Deuteronomy, from ch. xii.—xxvi. inclusive, could have been easily contained in letters an inch high on a few "great plastered stones." "The famous

Behistûn inscription of Darius in its triple form is twice as long as this entire code, besides being carved in bold characters in the solid rock, and in a position difficult of access on the mountain side."

Yet it seems most likely that it was the Decalogue alone that was here inscribed on these plastered stones. For such a record was perhaps better adapted than anything else, to the purpose Joshua had in view. They are short, and therefore could be quickly written. They are a perfect summary of the conditions on which Israel held the gift it had now formally received. They are the far-reaching index of blessing and curse. The altar spoke of what the Holy Presence in Israel bestowed. These stones spoke of what this Holy Presence demanded. Moses brought them first of all from the mount written on tables of stone. Joshua rewrites them on these stones, so that they may stand out clear and legible to every passer-by, and be pondered by their descendants for hundreds of years to come. The stones on Jordan's bank spoke of Jehovah's gracious power. The stones of Jericho declare His judgment. The stones of Achor speak of His discipline. The stones of Ai tell His faithfulness. The stones of Ebal are witnesses of His holiness. They tell what is becoming in the people whose God is the Lord. They hold up the standard whereby His people are to walk.

Has this standard changed? Are its precepts binding still, or have they become antiquated? Are these ten words the Christian's standard and rule of life? Some answer very emphatically, no. They tell us that Christ is the Christian's standard, not the Decalogue. True, we reply, Christ is the Christian's standard, but what does this mean? Surely if it

means anything, it means that we are to walk as He walked ; that we are to imitate Him in all things. And how did He walk, what standard did He set before Himself ? Does He not tell us, "Thy law is within my heart" ? Did He not meditate thereon day and night ? Did He not say, "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil" ? Can we possibly imitate Him, if we do not set before us that perfect standard which was His rule in life ? Nay—there can be nothing higher in our lives than obedience to this good law. The death of the Lord Jesus was the highest act of obedience to the law, for it was the perfect proof that He loved the Lord God, with all His heart and soul, and strength and mind. It is a vain morality, it is a false spirituality, which dreams that it can rise above obedience to the law.

Yet many have distorted views on this subject, a distortion which in too many cases paves the way to the horrible pit of Antinomianism. One of the great needs of the Christianity of the present day, is a hearty recognition of the binding nature of these ten words, and of the dignity of "Duty." The genesis of the consciousness, expressed by the word "Ought," may be a puzzle to the metaphysician ; but the idea is very plain and very precious, to the simple-minded disciple, when confronted with the ten commandments ; except his conscience is warped by baneful theories. These, alas ! are not uncommon. Therefore for the sake of any such, as well as for our own assurance, I would place side by side those ten words plastered on those stones by Joshua, and some of their corresponding reiterations, as printed in the epistles of the New Testament apostles.

FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Old Testament.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”—Exod. xx. 3.

New Testament.

“This is the true God, and eternal life.”—1 John v. 20.

SECOND COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”—Exod. xx. 4-6.

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”—1 John v. 21.

THIRD COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.”—Exod. xx. 7.

“But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”—James v. 12.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.”—Rev. i. 10.

For in six days the **LORD** made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the **LORD** blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”—Exod. xx. 8-11.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

“ Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the **LORD** thy God giveth thee.”—Exod. xx. 12.

“ Children, obey your parents in the **Lord**: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise. That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”—Ephes. vi. 1-3.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

“ Thou shalt not kill.”—Exod. xx. 13.

“ But let none of you suffer as a murderer.”—I Peter iv. 15.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

“ Thou shalt not commit adultery.”—Exod. xx. 14.

“ Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”—I Cor. vi. 9, 10.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

“ Thou shalt not steal.”—Exod. xx. 15.

“ Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”—Eph. iv. 28.

NINTH COMMANDMENT.

“ Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”—Exod. xx. 16.

“ Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds. And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”—Col. iii. 9, 10.

TENTH COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”—Exod. xx. 17.

“Let your conversation be without covetousness ; and be content with such things as ye have : for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”—Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

SUMMARIES.

“And thou shalt love the **LORD** thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”—Deut. vi. 5.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—Lev. xix. 18.

“If any man love not the **Lord** Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”—I Cor. xvi. 22.

“Owe no man anything, but to love one another : for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet ; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour : therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”—Rom. xiii. 8-10.

Who that compares these columns can fail to see the parallelism ? We see how the old commandments of Moses are repeated with new sanctions and encouragements by the apostles of Jesus. The words of our Saviour Himself, had they been inserted, would have made the parallelism, if possible, even more clear ; but I have purposely refrained from quoting them,

because some who specially need instruction in regard to this matter, strangely assert that the Founder of the Gospel, full of grace and truth, lays down legal principles when He thus speaks.

These were the words which Joshua caused to be plastered on these memorial-stones ; and as they stand there in sight of all the people, and he gazes on the mighty concourse that crowds the valley, could he have failed to connect this gathering of the great congregation with that other solemn assembly which took place forty years before at the foot of Sinai ? Fifty days after the great passover, Israel heard for the first time this sublime declaration of man's duty and God's will. Like a shepherd leading his flock, Jehovah had guided Israel unto the sabbatic solitudes of the desert peninsula enclasped by the two arms of the Red Sea. Vividly is the scene still photographed on Joshua's memory. This lonely amphitheatre of rocks, is the solemn sanctuary into which Jehovah has led His redeemed, to hear His holy law. That steep and towering mass of granite, is the sublime pulpit, from which it shall be thundered forth.

Well does he remember the careful preparation that was made for that great day, the barriers erected, the washings enjoined, the abstinence commanded. All in Israel, even the priests, had to consecrate themselves, and thus prepare for the descent of Jehovah. He remembers the feelings of awe and solemn expectation with which Israel waited during those three holy days. And lo ! on the morning of the third day, as the sun rose on the bare and silent hills, Jehovah came ! A thick cloud and fiery smoke wrapped the summit of Sinai, telling how He who dwelleth in thick darkness

is a consuming fire. The winged lightnings flashed around like the glance of His angry eye. The thunder crashed in appalling peals, echoed and re-echoed from the trembling heights, like the sound of that voice which is full of majesty. Above all, the clear tone of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, thrilling every soul with deepest awe, and telling all in Israel that here they were confronted, not with the powers of nature, but with the living God. And so nature itself owned the awful presence—even Sinai shook before the Lord, the God of Israel. How grand and awful, how Godlike, was this descent! Surely that was a day much to be remembered; therefore now when at the very heart of the purchased possession, Israel formally received it from the hand of God, it was meet that Joshua should bring these words and that solemn scene to their remembrance; it was well that they should assemble to listen with reverence to the revelations of that great day; to ponder deeply the ten words spoken with such solemn accompaniments; to treasure in their hearts, and practise in their lives, those precepts, so short, yet so comprehensive; so simple, yet so authoritative, spoken then from Sinai and plastered now on these stones.

And it is thus that the true Joshua deals with every soul whom He redeems and leads into the Heavenly inheritance. These are also the laws of that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The unique and prominent position which they occupy is manifested in several ways.

We may see it in the manner in which they were given. God spake all these words with His own lips. They came to Israel, not through any creature channel,

nor by the interposition of any being, human or angelic; but directly and immediately from God Himself: and while He thus spake, all men stood on a level before Him—Moses, as well as the meanest in Israel, did exceedingly fear and tremble. Moreover, God thus spake these words only. He had many other injunctions to give to Israel, but all these were given indirectly through others. And not only did the lips of God utter all these words, and only these words, His fingers also engraved them on tables of stone. As if speaking them, even with such imposing majesty, were not sufficient to fix them on the memory of man, He wrote them—ay, and re-wrote them after the first two tables had been broken—that they might stand unquestioned as His very words. And to fix them perpetually, to show that they would endure as long as the everlasting hills, He wrote them, not on destructible Egyptian papyrus, but on tables of durable stone. And, lastly, that nothing should be added to them, that nothing should be taken from them, but that they should ever remain the perfect and complete declaration of His will, He covered with the writing both sides of these two tables. How careful is God to manifest His solicitude concerning these words, to invest them with peculiar sacredness, to keep them fresh in the memory of man for ever, without shadow of human admixture.

The number of these words is also an indication of their unique position. They are ten, and there is a universally recognised significance in this number founded on the very nature of things. The Rabbis call it the “All comprehending number.” The tenth, by virtue of the general laws of thought, shuts up the series of primary numbers and implies all that follow.

Accordingly it becomes the natural emblem of completeness. This is manifested in the scriptural usage of the number. Egypt was afflicted with ten plagues, completing a circle of judgment. The people sinned ten times in the wilderness (Numbers xiv. 22), filling up the measure of their unfaithfulness and iniquity. The giving of tithes was a recognition of the Divine sovereignty over all. In the New Testament we read of the ten virgins and the ten horns (powers). Thus, from the very fact that these words are ten, that this is a Decalogue, we have an indication that they occupy a peculiar place even among other Divine Commandments. Surely it is an indication that they are not to be reckoned with others, ceremonial or civil, but that they form in themselves a perfect whole; they are a complete summary of duty, than which there can be nothing higher or deeper, or more wide and far reaching.

Their name also manifests this peculiar position. They were called pre-eminently "The Covenant" (Deut. iv. 13; ix. 9-11). The "Words written on tables" are called "The words of the Covenant" (Exodus xxxiv. 28). We read, no doubt, of the "Book of the Covenant"; but there is a carefully marked distinction between the ten and all other laws. The ten are called the words of the Lord; the others are called His judgments, and were mere subsidiary aids and restraints for the purpose, among other things, of referring the conscience more definitely and continuously to the ten.

Their repository indicates the same truth. When God had written these words, He commanded Moses to construct for them a golden coffer, which, because it

contained them, was called “The Ark of the Covenant.” God would preserve these laws as the kings of the earth preserve their crown jewels. And first there must be framed, under the guidance of His own Spirit, the pure and precious ark as a fitting casket in which to keep these heavenly gems, more precious far than thousands of gold and silver. Then this ark must be enshrined in His immediate presence, must be placed in the Holy of Holies in the light of the Shekinah glory, and under the special keeping of His own never-sleeping eye. Thus these ten words became the glorious and hallowed centre of all Israel’s worship. How highly does God honour His law ; how carefully does He watch over it !

But above all is their unique position manifested by their history. Think of this in relation to Israel. With such a condensed code, with such a standard of duty, with such a revelation of the Divine will, how highly was Israel favoured ! While the nations around were groping in darkness as to the being of God and the whole duty of man, Israel walked in the light of the law, holy, just, and good. By this revelation Israel was at once put in advance of all the world by fifteen centuries at least ; and “The child who knew these ten commandments was wiser than Socrates or Cicero adoring a statue.” How precious were these ten words to those whose hearts had been touched by God’s good Spirit ! With what raptures did they sing their praises ; with what diligence did they ponder them ; they were their study day and night. With what pious ingenuity did they seek to magnify them in their own eyes and those of their children. The 119th Psalm is nothing more than a pious and

elaborate endeavour to fulfil this good design—a Hebrew alphabet, so arranged that even a child, in learning its letters, might be instructed in the beauty of this holy law.

And while it was the glory of all in Israel who were of a meek and contrite spirit, how terrible was it to those who sinned against God, and walked in their own rebellious ways ! With what an arm of strength did they endow a Moses, a Joshua, a David, an Elijah, or a John the Baptist, in denouncing the evil of sin ! Here it was that Moses and all the holy prophets found those truths which thundered at the door of man's heart, and took his conscience by storm. Armed with this they were able to hold the mirror up to nature, and reveal it in its true light. No need of a drama as long as these ten words are faithfully exhibited to sinful men.

Thus, both to the faithful and unfaithful in Israel, the value of these words cannot be estimated.

But think of them also in relation to Jesus. How prominent are these ten words in His teachings. He began His ministry by reading them out anew ; and He ended it by fulfilling all to the last letter. When He came into the world He found that a true appreciation of them was almost entirely lost ; that the thoughts even of the leaders of Israel in regard to them were utterly perverted, and unspeakably pernicious. The subsidiary ordinances were observed with punctiliousness, while these ten words were forgotten or explained away. Their honourable place as the heart and centre of all the Divine revelation to Israel, was absolutely ignored. “ The grand old pillar had almost disappeared ; a jungle of weeds and worthless creepers had

sprung up around it ; and instead of insisting on a pure heart and a holy life, the Ritualists, and word splitters, and tradition mongers, laid down rules about the shape of scarves and the breadth of hems, and preached about the washing of pots and tables, and the paying tithe of mint and cummin. Jesus cut away all this noisome tangle with the sharp sword of indignant rebuke ; and whilst the newts and blind worms wriggled off from the unwelcome light, that memorial column, inscribed with man's duty and his Maker's will, stood forth to view in the Sermon on the Mount, and beholders were astonished at its majesty. And as they gazed upon it He re-read its characters. Where others read only prohibition, He read requirement. Where others read outward act, He read inmost feeling. From the Divine negative, He printed off the Divine and more glorious positive ; and men listened with wonder, for He spake with authority, and not as the Scribes."

But Jesus was not content with expounding the law ; He also fulfilled it. He was a prophet ; but He was more than a prophet : He was Jesus, and it became Him, as the Saviour of the world, to "Fulfil all righteousness." For fifteen centuries these ten words had stood a challenge to the whole world : a golden trumpet, like what we read in fable, hung upon the palace of the King of kings, whose blast would open wide these gates that lead to glory. For all the past centuries of the world's history it had been dumb. Many had tried to wake its music, but all had failed. At last He came : He put it to His hallowed lips, and wondrous music echoed through the earth and skies. The gates were opened wide, and in there thronged

the glorious host of the redeemed with Jesus at their head.

Think of them also in relation to ourselves. Who can tell how much we owe to these ten words? Could we conceive a well-ordered world without them? Is not that the happiest home, the happiest town, the happiest land, where these laws are most closely and conscientiously kept? Is not that the most prosperous country whose code of laws is founded on these ten words of Sinai? Wherever these are obeyed to any fair extent, by any people, we have peace, prosperity, and happiness. It is the height of ingratitude to underestimate the innumerable benefits which we even now enjoy from these Divine commands. And if even now, with their imperfect observance, we are unable to estimate the direct benefits which they bring, who can tell what the blessing will be when they are fully kept? Will it not be as life from the dead, to this ruined, groaning world? Given the true observance in heart and conduct of these ten words throughout the world to-morrow, and we have the spiritual condition of the millennium. What a glorious world would it be, if, by all men, everywhere, and at all times, they were fully honoured and implicitly obeyed. The day that sees such obedience universal will be the happiest day that ever dawned upon earth.

And to this correspond the promises of God. Such a blessed time is coming, when, as in the case of Israel, so in that of all men, shall the Divine word be fulfilled, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jer. xxxi. 33). God will impart no new thing—will make no fresh revelation; but this law, given at Sinai, will, as it was then printed

on tables of stone, be again printed indelibly on the fleshy tables of every human heart. Thus while the operation of the Holy Ghost in the present dispensation is for this very purpose, viz., "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rev. viii. 4), His blessed operations have no higher or better result than obedience to these, even in millennial glory. Do not dream, then, that the law is dead, neither drag it down from the high place which the hand of God has given it in the past, the present, and the future. Do not degrade it as a thing common or inglorious. See how the Almighty honours it! Behold the Father watching over it. Behold the Son fulfilling it. Behold the Holy Ghost working obedience to it. See that you honour and exalt it, as do the blessed Trinity.

The opening words of Jehovah constitute a preface to the Decalogue which, though often overlooked, are in a sense the key of the Commandments, and open up to us the true place and relations of the law of God. By them the most memorable night and the most memorable day in the history of Israel are for ever united. The words "I am the Lord thy God, which hath brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," constitute a link between the salvation of the Passover and the revelation of the law, riveted by the hand of God Himself, and which too many, failing to acknowledge, have erred grievously. This preface gives the ground of all true obedience, and is, therefore, evangelical in the highest sense. It is like a prism, through which the sunshine of redeeming love, the rays of saving grace, stream upon all the ten, and light them up with gospel glory. The ten call us to obedience; but first, the preface furnishes

us with the true motive-power of all obedience. As the little slave girl found her incentive to constant obedience in the thought, "He redeemed me," so our hearts are drawn to the obedience of the Ten Commandments. These laws stretch forward in two parallel lines, of duty to God and duty to man, through all the future, like rigid rails of steel: but they are laid down, not to be a hindrance, but rather a help unspeakable, and a guidance indispensable, to every soul who knows the power of which the preface speaks, and whose deepest desire is, kindled into spiritual energy by redeeming love, to walk by the guidance of God's holy eye.

In the preface God neither forbids nor commands, but comes forth in His true dignity to devote His people to Himself, and claim the authority He deserves.

First, He reveals Himself in His Majesty. "I am Jehovah;" the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; "Without variableness or shadow of turning;" the only Being in all the universe to whom men are bound because of their existence. This is He whose creatures we all are, who has bestowed upon us everything that we are and have, and who alone preserves us. "I am Jehovah."

He also reveals Himself in His Holiness. "I am thy God." This word "thy" implies that He had chosen Israel to be His peculiarly; that He had separated them from all other nations. But why had He thus chosen and separated Israel? It was because there was a necessity for it in His very being, because He was holy. God's holiness is the explanation of the call of Abraham. All flesh had corrupted its way —had forgotten God, had become blind to His unity,

spirituality, glory: therefore He called Abraham, and chose Israel to be His witnesses in the world. Thus the expression "I am thy God" reminds Israel of His holiness.

He also reveals himself in Love. He not only says, "I am Jehovah," "I am thy God;" He also adds, "That brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage:" that is to say, I am Jehovah that hath redeemed thee, that hath loved thee with an everlasting love. I am He that pitied you in the house of bondage; that heard your groans by reason of your burdens; that counted all your sighs; that put your tears in my bottle; that brought vengeance on your oppressors; that magnified my holy and loving name in Zoan's field; that led you out with a strong hand and a stretched-out arm; that made nature bow before you, and opened up a path through the dreaded depths; who bore you on eagles' wings, so that no arrow of the enemy could touch you. I am He that fed you with the bread of heaven, that gave you water out of the flinty rock, that brought you to myself. I am Jehovah, thy God, that brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Surely in these words God reveals Himself in sweetest, most persuasive love. Thus he seeks to win human hearts to the obedience of His holy law. Do not say then, as do some, that he who seeks constantly to obey them, to make them the rule of his life, is guilty of legality. Behold rather how God draws all to their obedience by the three-fold cord of Creation, Sanctification, and Redemption. Have we not, in this preface, revealed—The Father, as the great and glorious Head of all; The Spirit, the Sanctifier

who sets apart a people to be His ; The Son, the great Redeemer ? All men are thus drawn by the Father's majesty to reverence, by the Spirit's holiness to consecration, and by the Son's redeeming love to gratitude. Thus Father, Son, and Holy Ghost stamp on the obedience of these ten their eternal approval. As Israel, rejoicing in the blessings of their earthly inheritance, gave their solemn allegiance to that law, so must we if we are to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

XX.

A CANAANITISH LEAGUE.

“And it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof; that they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.”—JOSH. ix. 1, 2.

IN the opening verses of the ninth chapter of Joshua we have an account of the great confederation of the clans of Canaan; their mighty league for the purpose of resisting Joshua and hurling back the tide of invasion which was rolling in upon them. The whole land was evidently in a ferment, and as we look at the unanimity, the enthusiasm, and the determination of these kings of Canaan we are reminded of the Psalmist’s question, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” This league manifested their hatred against God and His people; and their superlative folly in dreaming that they could effectually resist the purpose of Him who had so evidently shown Himself the Almighty, as well as their flippant impiety in making the attempt, may well call forth this question of holy astonishment.

See these Canaanites. At the very hour that Israel worships solemnly in the vale of Sichem and dedicates herself anew to Jehovah while she takes formal pos-

session of the land in His name, these hardened heathens band themselves together to break Jehovah's bonds and cast away His cords. Why do they rage like restless waves of ocean lashed into fury by the hurricane of a common hate? This is a new thing in their history. Hitherto each clan had acted on the selfish principle of getting all it could at the expense of its neighbours, but now their wisdom dictates another policy, and they determine to make common cause against a common foe.

NOTICE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS LEAGUE: It was very wide to begin with, embracing every tribe in Canaan, those of the hills as well as those of the plain, and those of the sea coast as well as those inland. Even so has it been in all ages. A league against the people of God and the truth of God will get recruits from all quarters; will not fail to be popular and attractive so long as Satan is god of this world. Men of all ranks and occupations can be found to sneer at, condemn, and crush if they could, the pure gospel.

This league was also very singular. Strange elements were brought together on this occasion. Never within the memory of the oldest Canaanite had there been such a strange coalition. They could tell many a tale of mutual raids and excesses; of envies, jealousies, recriminations, quarrels, feuds, skirmishes; but anything like this was beyond their experience. In this hour all mutual jealousies and antagonistic interests are forgotten. A common danger, a common enemy, a common hate, makes them forget old feuds, bury the war-hatchet, and unite on common ground for a common object. In the course of this world's history many curious combinations of very

heterogeneous elements have been brought about by man's common enmity against the God of truth and the truth of God. Who ever hated each other more cordially than Pharisee and Sadducee? yet they united in crying, "Crucify Him," and in compassing His death. Pilate and Herod cemented their broken friendship with His blood. The silversmiths at Ephesus had many bickerings and mutual envyings and jealousies, but when their craft was in danger, they forgot their feuds and shouted with one voice, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

This league was also spontaneous. No pressure was employed to gather the clans together; for the simple reason that none was needed. On every side there sprang up a desire to take united action. United we stand, divided we fall, was their firm belief. The spirit of combination was in the air, the desire for union and united action. Therefore from every quarter they were ready to gather together as eagles over a carcass, moved by one purpose, one unholy instinct. This was a deep-seated, widespread movement, owing its origin and all its strength to the natural bias of unregenerated hearts. It is a sad and a terrible fact that the deepest thing in the natural heart is enmity against God. Every sinner is potentially a Deicide. Can there be a greater manifestation of depravity than a spontaneous league of sinful souls against their God?

This league was also crafty. The wisest heads in Canaan were here drawn together, and engaged in strengthening this league. Their most skilful diplomats, their most wily warriors, would give their advice, and seek to help the league in every way. The rich would give of their substance, the poor would give their

strength, the wise would use their wits in discussing and arranging plans ; and thus by their united energy all might yet be well. Thus again and again has all man's wisdom been brought to bear against the purposes of God.

And who could deny that such a league was powerful ? It was powerful because of all the accumulated experience and wisdom that could be brought to bear upon the work ; because of the minute knowledge of the country which the common people as well as the leaders possessed ; and because of the immense resources they could fall back upon. They had plenty of money, they had plenty of trained men, why need they despair ? Their former feuds had been a good training school for their warriors, and now that they stand shoulder to shoulder against a common foe, they will stimulate each other to more strenuous effort.

And it is also very plain that this league was heartily, yea, even enthusiastically entered into. Not one dissentient voice was heard from any quarter. With one mind and one mouth they pledge themselves to this work. With the utmost enthusiasm and the strongest determination they band themselves together, determined to give themselves no rest till Israel is driven out. Like the great sea billows they rage against this bark, and with implacable wrath would smite and overwhelm it. Alas, frail bark ! Alas, poor Israel ! what canst thou do against such a league, so wide, so strange, so spontaneous, so crafty, so powerful, so zealous ?

“ Now Israel may say, and that truly,
If that the Lord had not our cause maintained ;
If that the Lord had not our right sustained,

When cruel men against us furiously
Rose up in wrath to make of us their prey ;

“ Then certainly they had devoured us all,
And swallowed quick for ought that we could deem ;
Such was their rage as we might well esteem,
And as fierce floods before them all things drown
So had they brought our soul to death quite down.

“ The raging streams with their proud swelling waves
Had then our souls o'erwhelmed in the deep ;
But bless'd be God who doth us safely keep,
And hath not given us for a living prey
Unto their teeth and bloody cruelty.

“ Even as a bird out of the fowler's snare
Escapes away, so is our soul set free ;
Broke are their nets, and thus escaped we.
Therefore our help is in the Lord's great name,
Who heaven and earth by His great power did frame.”

MARK ALSO THE OCCASION OF THIS LEAGUE. No doubt many things contributed to bring it about, but one thing is specially singled out and mentioned by the Holy Ghost in this connection. It was not anything that occurred east of the Jordan, though the defeat of the famous kings Sihon and Og must have moved them greatly. It was not even the passage of the Jordan, or the fall of Jericho, or the sacking of Ai which roused them to this action ; it was the events that transpired at Ebal and Gerizim. When they heard of that strange march and the solemn ceremony in the vale of Shechem, then they gathered themselves together to fight with Joshua and with Israel with one accord.

This shows that these Canaanites understood something of the significance of this action. They interpreted it rightly as an act of dispossession, so far as they were concerned. There they see their enemy solemnly laying hands on that land they claimed as their own ;

doing so in the name of Jehovah their God, doing so as a people who have vowed allegiance to Him, and who would be faithful in carrying out His commission to drive them out. They reason rightly from this consecration that Israel being Jehovah's peculiar people, could make no compact with them or tolerate their gods; that they could never be content with neutrality and a friendly co-partnership in the land. The claims and the spirit of Israel are utterly inconsistent with friendship for us, they reason, therefore we must either submit unconditionally or resist to the uttermost.

How often does the pious devotion of God's people provoke and exasperate the unrighteous above everything else! As this quiet conventicle on Ebal and Gerizim roused the Canaanites more than all Israel's victories, so "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We do not require to oppose sinners in order to raise their enmity, we have only to live godly, we have only to walk in the power of the world to come. Why is this? Just because there is nothing that shows more plainly the fundamental difference between the children of God and the men of the world. Accordingly nothing puts the two so absolutely in antagonism. Why did Cain hate Abel so furiously? Wherefore slew he him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. The sinner hates above all things the holiness of the saint, because it is his most emphatic condemnation. Perfect surrender to God's will always brings the enmity of the world to a head. Would you learn the true spirit of the world? March to Ebal and Gerizim, and pitch your tent in that sacred and fruitful vale of utter

consecration. Live out the lines of that elect lady who sings—

“Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee ;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

“Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love ;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

“Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only, for my King ;
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

“Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold ;
Take my intellect and use
Every power as Thou dost choose.

“Take my will and make it Thine—
It shall be no longer mine ;
Take my heart, it is Thine own ;
It shall be Thy royal throne.

“Take my love ; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store ;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all, for Thee !”

But if such a life as this stirs up of necessity the evil which reigns in the heart of man, it is also to be remembered that such a life alone is powerful to do good to man or bring glory to God. Who can measure the strength of such consecrated souls ? John Wesley knew something of this when he said, “Give me ten men who hate sin only and love God only, and I will shake the gates of hell.” Its enmity will be roused,

even as that of the Canaanites by the consecration of Israel; but it will be roused, only like theirs, to be utterly broken.

NOTICE ALSO THE PURPOSE OF THIS LEAGUE. They banded themselves together "To fight against Joshua and against Israel." It was a warlike league. They had no thought of peace or of submission. This fact is undeniable, and in estimating it at its true value, we must not lose sight of the supernatural and religious element in this history. Though great wonders have been wrought before their very eyes, they will oppose this people. Therefore their action cannot for a moment be classed with the resistance which, *e.g.*, the Britons offered to the invading Romans under Cæsar. The position of these Canaanites was altogether different. In fighting against Israel, they deliberately set themselves against Israel's God, Jehovah. As certainly as Pharaoh did so, in refusing exit from Egypt to this people, so certainly did they in refusing them entrance into Canaan. We know that this religious and supernatural element was prominent in their minds and frequently on their lips, from the testimony of Rahab and of the Gibeonites; and with a full knowledge of all that has happened, confident in the might of their false gods, they deliberately set themselves to cross swords and measure conclusions with Jehovah. They knowingly pit the strength of their idols against that of the Lord of hosts. At Him they aim their shafts through His people. Earth loves not its rightful Monarch. It rebels against His edicts, it cleaves to the great usurper's sway. These nations take counsel against the Lord. "Though He has stricken them they have not grieved; though He has consumed them

they refused to receive correction ; they have made their faces harder than the rock."

What daring rebellion have we here ? men plotting under God's very eyes. Conspirators usually meet in secret, in the darkness of night, screened from the eye and sheltered from the hand of the power outraged ; but here these sinners gather together openly, to take counsel against Him who is marching through their land in awful majesty. They know the purpose of Jehovah. The decree had long been declared. It was no secret to any. Yet it is their purpose to defeat His purpose ; it is their will to overthrow His will.

Surely, then, we must exclaim again, What astounding infatuation ! Unity, men say, is strength ; but it is not so here. That decree has gone forth ; can they countermand it ? Can they make it a dead letter ? They know His power as well as His purpose ; can they stand against such might ? Can the chaff or the dry leaves of autumn stand before the blast ? Are these leaguers Samsons, who can cast aside the Divine decrees as he did the withes ? Are the bonds of Omnipotence like singed flax in their hands ? How unreasonable is this resistance ! How astounding is this infatuation ! Sir, of all the mad things you can do, the maddest, the most irrational, is to attempt to resist the will of God. "Who hath hardened himself against Thee and hath prospered ?" Oh, hardened soul, remember the only alternatives. Bend or break ; turn or burn.

What utter futility have we here ? Could we conceive anything more useless, more inefficient, more foolish, more powerless, than this league ? The wisest counsels of their longest heads are the harebrained

chatter of imbeciles. All their energy is but the trembling of a paralytic. God sees and hears all their plans; and knowing His own purposes has them in derision. While they are sagely proposing He is supremely disposing. His plans are all appointed, and His people shall not be disappointed. The only consequence to these leaguers will be their own ruin. For this they plot, and not in vain. It comes upon them as a whirlwind, certain, irresistible, terrible, complete, irretrievable.

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS OF THIS LEAGUE? Surely, to begin with, we are very plainly taught that the people of God in carrying out the purposes of God may count upon opposition. This is no isolated and exceptional case. It is one of a long series of examples, which make this matter very plain to the docile and intelligent soul. It always has been so; and it will be so to the very end, for we read that even the glorious millennium is ushered in with a terrible struggle.

We are apt to get downhearted when we see the hosts of evil mustering on every side. When we hear of strong Canaanitish leagues of wickedness being formed against the gospel; when we see the banners of these unchristian combinations flaunting in the breeze; when we hear the thunder of their hellish artillery; when we see the sulphurous smoke of their bewildering error,—in such circumstances do we exclaim, “What can the poor Church of God do?” If she can do nothing more, she can look up. She can see a sight which can calm all her fears, and make her laugh to scorn her loudest foes. Look up then! Look up! See Him who sitteth on the

circle of the heavens, and before whom the nations are as grasshoppers. God is keeping silence. God is having them in derision. The attacks which to us may seem formidable are to Him despicable. Therefore let Rationalism nail to the mast her black flag, with the skull and crossbones of spiritual death ; let Romanism flaunt her scarlet rag and proclaim herself the mistress of the world. He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh. And when He rises, where will all their compacts be ? He shall speak to them in His wrath. He shall vex them in His sore displeasure. He will break them with a rod of iron. He will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Let us therefore have good hope. The systems of corruption and error and oppression, however well compacted and widely organized, must in the long run be destroyed, and he who expects and prays and works for their downfall will not be disappointed. Let us look back when we are despondent and fainthearted, and remember how often

“Our God hath crushed the tyrant,
Our God hath raised the slave,
And mocked the counsel of the wise,
And the valour of the brave ;”

look back and remember how often God has restrained the wrath of the enemy ; how often, when iniquity was coming in as a flood, He has raised up a standard against it.

Yea, look around, and see what God hath wrought. Think of the diffusion of Christianity, and of its mighty influence, whether direct or indirect. Men talk of its decadence, but notwithstanding all its blots and weaknesses, he who reads history will not be deceived

by the babblings of a bigoted Rationalism or a purblind Sectarianism. This cry is an old one. Voltaire raised it in his day, and boasted that if twelve men founded Christianity he would let the world see that one man could destroy it. That face of his, sharpened with a thousand sneers, has passed away, and the very press that once diffused his thoughts is now employed in printing Bibles. And long before the day of Voltaire did not Diocletian order a medal to be struck with the inscription, "The name of Christians being extinguished"? Were there not two memorial pillars raised in Spain to the same effect? On the one could be read "Diocletian" (here add all his titles), "for having extinguished the name of Christians." On the other were the words "Diocletian . . . for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ." How present facts laugh to scorn these monuments and that medal! How many thousands throughout the world who do not even know who Diocletian was would willingly die for Christ. Paganism thought to rear a monument over a fallen foe; but so far from being dead, Christianity, at the time when Diocletian erected its tombstone, was on the eve of one of its greatest triumphs. "These costly stones guarded a sepulchre empty as the urn which Electra washed with her tears." Who can point out the tomb of Christianity?

But we may learn another lesson from this league. We may learn as the host of God to unite our forces more and more in prosecuting the work set before us. If we be of different tribes let us be of one heart and one mind as to the evangelization of the world and the consecration of the soul. Diversity of opinion on

non-essentials is not incompatible with unity of action on the great field set before us. The man who magnifies any "ism" so as to paralyse aggressive action is working into the hands of the enemy. Let us be united, let us lay aside all animosities and petty jealousies; let us sacrifice private interests to the public welfare; let us waive subordinate matters on which we differ, and exalt the fundamental truths on which we agree; let us cordially unite with all God's people against the common enemies of our Saviour's kingdom, and we shall find that the gates of hell will not prevail against us.

XXI.

A CANAANITISH STRATAGEM.

“The inhabitants of Gibeon . . . did work wilyly.”—JOSH. ix. 3.

WHEN most of the kings of Canaan banded themselves together in a great alliance to resist Joshua, there were some whose hearts misgave them. The name of the Gergashite does not appear in the list of confederate kings ; and the Jewish tradition, supported by the eminent Byzantine historian Procopius, is that on the approach of Joshua they fled to the south-western shore of the Mediterranean Sea. This, however, is uncertain ; but here we are told that Gibeon, the head of the little Hivite republic, of which Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-Jearim were the leading cities, resolved to work wilyly in this matter, for they were convinced that all resistance was vain. Thus, if in the beginning of the chapter we have the description of a Canaanitish league, in the rest of it we have the unfolding of a Canaanitish stratagem. The great majority are resolved to resist Joshua ; this minority try to outwit him.

NOTICE FIRST HOW THIS DEVICE ORIGINATED. Their wisdom suggested it. The Canaanitish kings in their wisdom took counsel together, and determined to resist ; the wise men among the Gibeonites suggest a totally different course. The antithesis in the original is lost

by the omission of "also" in v. 4—"And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and Ai they *also* did work wilily." That is to say, the selfsame facts suggest different courses of action to the Canaanites and to the Gibeonites. These events led the great majority to unite their forces against Joshua; they led this Gibeonitish minority to see if they could not come to terms with this irresistible foe. There was no sense whatever in the counsels of the kings. They ought to have assembled in a lunatic asylum, for their wisest counsels were but the ravings of a maniac. There is a spark of wisdom in the craft of the republican Gibeonites. They do come to a wise decision when they resolve to bear anything sooner than provoke God against them by vain resistance. They wish to agree with their adversary quickly whilst he is in the way, and before he takes the final and irrevocable step. They do not wait till they are too late, but "Send an embassage and desire conditions of peace" while such a thing is possible. All this shows that, like the unjust steward, these Gibeonites are wise in their generation. And if our Saviour drew a profitable lesson from his conduct, surely it becomes us to do the same by these Gibeonites. Is it not a fact, which cannot be disputed, that the selfsame gospel produces different effects on different individuals? To some the messengers of Christ are a savour of life unto life; to others, a savour of death unto death. We have as clear evidence of God's purpose to destroy the ungodly as the Gibeonites had of His purpose to exterminate the Canaanites. Let us, like them, humble ourselves before God's irresistible might. It is our only wisdom. Let us not talk foolishly of the manly

course of resistance, and the cowardly and selfish desire to save ourselves. Such refined sophism is a snare of Satan. We cannot harden ourselves against God and prosper ; to do so is neither a sign of manliness nor unselfishness, but of the very reverse. And let us see that we bow before Him in time. To Jesus every knee must bow ; to Him every tongue must confess. The glory of the Father has pledged this result. But let us see that we do it now, while God's patience waits, while such an acknowledgment is salvation. There is no use waiting till judgment is at the door ; no use staying till our souls are besieged by sickness and death : "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

The fears of these Gibeonites also stimulated them, were a spur to their wisdom. They felt utterly undone, standing on the verge of the awful abyss of national ruin and personal destruction, and they saw no escape. They were placed right in front of that mysterious enemy, who was ready to spring upon and exterminate them. Gibeon was only about six miles south-west of Ai, and its inhabitants were far more keenly alive to the danger that threatened them than were those farther distant. Those may favour a league, but these conclude to sue for quarter. If those behind cry "Forward !" those before cry "Back !" Both cries indicated fear and selfishness if you please, but in the case of the Canaanites these led to combination and opposition, while in the case of the Gibeonites they led to separation and submission. Was the conduct of the Gibeonites ignoble ? Our hearts always side with the man who against overwhelming odds fights with grim consistency a losing battle, who resolves to "Perish if it

must be so ; at bay, destroying many a foe." But here again we must not lose sight of the religious element which was uppermost in the mind of all. It can never be right for the subject to rise against lawful authority. Our sympathies are wasted on rebels and brigands. It can never be right in the creature to resist the Creator. It can never be ignoble to throw down our weapons of rebellion and fall at the feet of the All-wise, the All-gracious, and the Almighty. It is the act of a madman to kick against the pricks.

Also, there was faith at the bottom of this movement. Craft and fear the Gibeonites had in common with the other Canaanites, but they had more, they had also faith. It may readily be allowed that it was very small ; microscopical, infinitesimal, if you choose. It may also be granted that it was also overlaid with error, guile, and selfishness. Their story is a tissue of falsehoods from beginning to end. Their faith did not present the same marvellous characteristics as Rahab's, though, as we have seen, hers was by no means perfect and unadulterated. Yet notwithstanding all these things faith was there. These Gibeonites did believe that the purpose of God would come to pass. They did believe that God desired to give Israel the land, and that He was able to do so. They had no confidence in their own ability to stand before Him. They are quite ready to relinquish their right in the land ; yea, they are prepared to renounce their false gods. Perhaps they had heard of the preservation of Rahab, for that thing was not done in a corner, and were encouraged by it to sue for mercy. At any rate, it is evident that they are willing to do anything, to come to any terms, for dear life. Therefore, taking

into account the training, the surroundings, and the habits of these Gibeonites, is there so much difference between them and us ? With what mixed motives do we give up our rebellion and fall at the feet of Jesus ? Can they bear full scrutiny ? Are we pleased with them ? I trow not. Now, perhaps, we see that we ought to love God for Himself, Jesus for His loveliness, and not for anything He can bestow upon us. Now we know that we should serve Him because His service is good and pleasant, yea, the highest liberty. But was it so when we first came to Him ? When we look back and analyse our thoughts and feelings, can we not discover a large leaven of mixed motives ? Accordingly, there is here much encouragement to all. You ask, "Is my faith of the right kind ?" See. If faith of this miserable description finds grace, who need despair ?

Perhaps our motives will not bear close examination ; perhaps it is true that it is a selfish thing to fear hell ; that it is nothing more than a hangman's whip. But if that whip lashes us to the feet of Jesus, and works for us salvation, we shall bless God for it for ever. It is all very well to sneer at such fear, and condemn it as worthless and selfish ; but we answer, "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings ?" You cannot sneer away eternal sorrow. So we may well look at the story of this stratagem and argue—"If even the guileful Gibeonites found mercy, so may we." And in the fear that drove them to the feet of Joshua we can see a picture of the working of that law which is perfect converting the soul. It performs one of its most blessed functions when it becomes a ten-thonged lash whipping us to the Saviour.

Notice in the second place HOW THIS PLAN WAS PROSECUTED. The thing was shrewdly conceived and skilfully conducted. These Gibeonites went about their work very cunningly. Anything is fair in war, so men say ; and anything is fair in diplomacy, so men have believed in past ages. We are ignorant of the custom that prevails nowadays, but he who knows anything of the history of nations knows that the diplomatist has been instructed to circumvent, lie, equivocate, promise, misrepresent, do anything so as to gain his end. It need not surprise us then that these Gibeonites followed the universal rule. They show their craft both by what they did and by what they hid. They came with old worn-out clothes and clouted shoes and mouldy bread and patched water-bottles like men weary and worn with a long journey. Their words to Joshua were most submissive and humble, most pious and complimentary. And all the time they carefully concealed where they came from. When they were asked about their place of abode, they adroitly shifted the subject and gave general replies, pointing to the visible proofs of the long journey they had made, and, like skilled rogues, counting on the ingenuous character of Joshua to avoid discovery. They also carefully concealed much that they knew. They talked a great deal about Egypt and the Red Sea ; about the marching through the wilderness, and the destruction of Sihon and Og ; but they breathed not a syllable about the crossing of Jordan, the fall of Jericho, or the capture of Ai. They were no novices in the art of deceit.

They also prosecuted their commission very courageously. The coolness and audacity of these men are

marvellous. They must have had strong nerves, a great command over themselves, and a deep knowledge of human nature. These men were neither fools nor cowards after all. A severe cross-examination would have unmasked them ; but they reckoned on the fact that an honest man does not like to be rudely suspicious. Such a calculation is one of the characteristics of the impostor. An honest man placed in a false or awkward position, *e.g.*, asking a favour from a stranger, cannot help asking himself, "What good reason has this man to trust my word ?" and all possible suspicions that may fill the mind of the other start up before him to his confusion. On the other hand, a hardened impostor counts on the credulity, kind-heartedness, or self-interest of his dupes, and is not troubled with such thoughts or fears.

Notice further, HOW THEIR STRATAGEM SUCCEEDED. It succeeded to perfection. Their plan wrought well, and its success may be attributed first of all to their own skill. Their audacity, cunning, and knowledge of human nature were all conspicuous in this transaction, and served them well. They were more than a match for the Israelites in the art of diplomacy. They parried the most pointed questions. They flattered, evaded, cajoled, submitted, and gained their ends.

The weakness of the Israelites helped to bring about the same result. As we read the narrative we are surprised at their credulity and simple-mindedness. These unsophisticated wanderers of the wilderness have little knowledge of the crafty ways of the world. Separated from Egypt, and from contact with the heathen, for forty years, they manifest a simplicity that is unusual. They have open ears for any plausible story. They

have no very deep desire to weigh the testimony presented. They take for granted that all is right, and therefore they manifest an unaccountable and criminal precipitation. It is one thing to be rudely suspicious, it is another thing to be over credulous. But practically how often are men at a loss how to decide when placed in similar circumstances ? Therefore we should not blame Israel too severely, but rather remember that the best cure either for over-credulity or over-caution is communion with God and distrust in self.

The men of Israel are also very self-conscious. Pride had something to do with their decision to take these strangers under their protection. They felt honoured and flattered by the supposed circumstances which made them a centre of universal attraction. The Gibeonites with great skill played upon the self-esteem of the Israelites ; and nothing blinds more completely, nothing throws a man off his guard more thoroughly, than deft and delicate flattery. Would you be an instrument in the hands of another, a pipe producing just such notes as the player pleases, think much of yourself ; give yourself out to be some great one ; open your ears and give up your heart to the sweet blandishments of flattering lips. Contrariwise remember that the humblest soul is the most independent.

The Israelites were also very self-confident, and this exposed them to the wiles of these schemers. They thought the matter a very simple, straightforward piece of business ; one that could be easily settled without consultation with God. Herein they failed very grievously, and this is recorded against them as the head and front of their error in this matter—"They

asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." We cannot too keenly feel or too carefully acknowledge that we are insufficient for the least duty or decision in our own wisdom and strength. They who walk by the light of their own eyes will certainly fall into the ditch, for they walk in darkness. No step that we take in life is too trivial to be made a matter of prayer. Only as we do so, consulting with God about everything, are we guided by His eye.

Here the Israelites put right questions—"Who are you?" "Whence come you?" but sufficient care was not taken to sift the answer and see if it was true. We must beware of credulity, self-consciousness, and self-confidence. We are exhorted to try the spirits whether they be of God. In examining the credentials of those who ask our confidence, we are to remember that appearances are not always to be trusted. "All is not gold that glitters." Much ancient armour is manufactured all the year round at Birmingham. A great deal of antique oak furniture is turned out of London workshops every year, and may be bought at very high prices. Not a few ancient statues are made to order in Italy in these days, and sold to innocent connoisseurs. Even so is it in things spiritual. The wolves are very clever at fitting themselves with sheep's clothing; the make-up is often particularly ingenious. They can mimic to perfection the bleating of the lambs; adopting well-loved phrases as blinds to their own false doctrine. There are not a few false teachers who have very plausible tongues, and who by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. Let the Israel of God take heed "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak

not according to this word it is because there is no light in them."

And we should apply this also to the affairs of every-day life. How often do we involve ourselves in difficulties, hedge up our way with troubles, lead ourselves into danger, because we "Ask not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." We give a listening ear to plausible representations ; we hurry headlong into inviting schemes ; we enter heedlessly into doubtful connections, without weighing the consequences or looking for Divine direction. But sooner or later we discover that no business, or engagement, or union can prosper without the counsel and approbation of the Lord ; and often with shame and sorrow we have to seek His face to undo the evils which our own rashness and unfaithfulness have brought upon us. Let it then be graven on our hearts, that they only are wise, who carry every perplexity to the throne of grace, and who feel continually, that no purposed course of conduct can be so clear to the Christian, as to excuse him from the duty of seeking direction from above.

But in considering this matter, our view would be very superficial did we not look higher than man and his motives. The purpose of Jehovah had also to do with the result. Why did He allow Joshua to be thus deceived ? To teach him and Israel a valuable lesson ? No doubt ; but it was also for the purpose of manifesting to all that He was not unwilling to show mercy to the very chief of sinners. Had these Gibeonites come openly and honestly, casting themselves at His feet, would He have spurned them from Him ? No, most emphatically no ! Rahab's case gives the perfect answer to this question. Had they acted in that

manner, Joshua would certainly have been in a great difficulty, for his orders as to their extermination were very strict. He would therefore have been compelled to consult the Urim and Thummim ; but we know, from events that have already transpired, what the result would have been. If with all their guile and crooked policy He spared these Gibeonites, much more would He have spared them if they had honestly cast themselves on His mercy. Yea, He spared them because they came ; He reproved them because they came thus. In this manner God separated the precious from the vile ; He commended their faith in coming, and condemned their mode of approach. Accordingly, while it was well for them that they came at all, nothing was gained but much was lost by their crooked policy. Thus is it always, and therefore what encouragement is there here to the open and ingenuous. What encouragement above all to the young. The younger we are the more simply and guilelessly and artlessly we approach God, and in this above all He delights ; hence the special declaration, " Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven " ; hence also the special promise, " They that seek me early shall find me." The longer we wait, the more fully will we be assimilated to the guileful Gibeonites ; the older we are, the more twisted and double-minded. Tarry not then another hour, submit yourselves now to the power of His grace, seeing in this narrative a proof of God's readiness to receive.

Notice lastly THE RESULT OF THIS STRATAGEM. Only three days after the league with them was concluded, the Israelites heard that they were their neighbours.

The fact that they had been so skilfully beguiled was not palatable to the Israelites. Joshua called the Gibeonites to him and asked, " Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you ; when ye dwell among us ? Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God. And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the Lord thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing. And now, behold, we are in thine hand : and as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do. And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose" (Josh. ix. 22-27).

Thus they received a place in Israel. This was no small matter ; far more than they had expected. This was no small favour where all would have perished. This place in Israel was obtained with difficulty. When it was discovered who these strangers were, the people were roused against the princes who had conducted the treaty with them, and murmured loudly at the result. How true to human nature is this murmuring. It is always easy to criticise those who are in authority, and find fault with the conclusions to which they come. Every toper in a village inn,

were you to credit him, could conduct the affairs of the British Empire with greater success than the wisest prime minister that ever lived. The most ignorant and irresponsible individual in a congregation is confident he would never have fallen into the mistakes of his betters. And sometimes, like the Israelites here, such self-constituted officials take high ground and speak very solemnly about convictions and constitutions, and very vehemently about unfaithfulness. It is well to remember, lest we ever be betrayed into such folly, that it is the easiest thing in the world to become a critic of that cast—nothing needs an emptier head or a smaller heart; accordingly we need not be surprised that some think it their special vocation.

These Israelites perhaps thought that they were very zealous for God in thus murmuring, but I am afraid that self-interest had a little to do with it. Was it not somewhat of a disappointment that they would not be able to finger the spoil of these Gibeonitish cities? How often does selfishness sharpen zeal. The proper time for murmuring or objecting would have been when the treaty was so hastily concluded. But these critics forgot that then also their heads were turned, and that in all likelihood they would have murmured if the princes had proposed any other course than the one they are now condemning. Yes, no doubt the popular voice was all in favour of making a league with these strangers. Was not the thing as plain as possible? Even a child could tell, as they crawled slowly through the camp with their worn sandals and patched garments, that they were ambassadors from a far country. But though equally deceived with their

leaders, they were not like them bound by a solemn oath, and therefore they felt free to murmur.

Yet it was a good sign that they went no further. Though they grumbled they submitted, and the Gibeonites were allowed to live. They owed their safety to the ability of Joshua and the princes of Israel. In this emergency the leaders displayed great firmness. They would not be moved from their position by popular clamour. They would not budge an inch from their oath. That was too sacred a thing to be tampered with; once given it must not be broken. They were also jealous of Jehovah's honour. The good name of Jehovah was more to Joshua and the princes than any inconvenience they would be put to. They felt that it would be better far to fulfil their agreement at any cost rather than by any shift or quibble to resile from it. Any gain thus made would be a great loss. "He who breaks his promise to spare himself, or who multiplies excuses and finds cause of delay in fulfilling that which he has engaged to do, is guilty of a great crime; for to spare his own pocket he robs the estate of human trustfulness, and thus pays a personal debt with public property. Such a man steals from the faith and rest and peace of his neighbours that he may please himself." Hence we should hail with pleasure every engagement honourably adhered to by nations, corporations, or individuals as an addition to the estate of human trustfulness, without which life would become a burden and business an impossibility.

Surely in this steadfast adherence of Joshua to this covenant the seeker may find great encouragement. There have been murmurers in the house of God who

have called in question the grace of that Saviour who forgives sinners. Remember the taunt of the Pharisees, "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The race of the self-righteous is not yet extinct; but Jesus is not less firm than Joshua, and justifies the ways of God to men in that glorious constellation of grace which the fifteenth chapter of Luke contains. The elder brother may murmur at the welcome accorded to the prodigal, but the father adheres to his welcome, and justifies his action with the words, "It was meet to make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." And God will adhere to His oath of salvation. Has He not declared, "As I live I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth"? Will God be less jealous for the glory of His name than was Joshua? Will that blessed name "Jesus" ever become a misnomer? Impossible. And all the more emphatically can we say so, because in the case of the sinner's reception and salvation there is no mistake, or error or ignorance. With a perfect knowledge of all our case, He proclaims Himself "A just God and a Saviour." Accordingly perfect confidence ought to be our portion. We can imagine with what trepidation these Gibeonites would wait during the three days in which their life hung in the balance, but that is unbecoming in us. God has discovered all and knows all, and has assured us that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

Again, these Gibeonites received a definite place among the people of God. They became an integral part of the nation, with duties as clearly defined as those of the tribe of Levi. Henceforth they were an

essential part of the people ; Israel's God was theirs ; Israel's friends were their friends, Israel's foes their foes ; and they were sharers in all Israel's fortunes. They changed sides absolutely and for ever. This fact was brought out very speedily. No sooner did the Canaanites hear of their defection than they marched to attack them. The Gibeonites cry for help, and Joshua went as readily and quickly to their succour, as if they had been one of the twelve tribes.

When we change sides, when we renounce the world, and cast in our lot with God's people, how speedily is the enmity of the world shown. Falling at the feet of Jesus, the glorious Conqueror who brings salvation, we quit our old allegiance ; and changing sides, our old friends become our new foes, often most bitter and relentless. The patrons and friends of Saul of Tarsus became the bitterest persecutors of Paul the Apostle. But what of this ? Jesus never fails us. If the world reckons us one with His people, so does He, and therefore we are safe.

The place which these Gibeonites received in Israel was, however, very humble. The lowest kind of drudgery was expected of them. They became hewers of wood and drawers of water ; their work, that is to say, was that of women and children in the East, and, therefore, looked upon as degrading for men. But if their place and occupation are very lowly, their Master is very high and honourable, and He so arranged that they should not be private slaves, scattered through the nation, but that they should be attached to the tabernacle as servants to the priests and Levites. Now the humblest office under a great and good man may be better than the highest place a mean and bad

master could offer. It would be better to black the boots of some men, than to roll in the carriage of others.

How many think the service of Christ the veriest drudgery—menial, degrading, Gibeonitish work, fit only for old women and young children? How often do the nice dashing young men of the period, laugh at the poor spiritless milksops who frequent prayer-meetings and such like, who stoop to the drudgery of teaching in the Sabbath school, visiting the sick, talking at a cottage meeting? Can we not remember the flash of scorn in the eye of former companions, the curl of contempt on the lip, when first with trembling hand we took a little piece of service for the despised Saviour? And it was hard to bear, a severe trial, a heavy cross. Perhaps that just fits in to your present circumstances. You fear the laugh, the gibe, the look of scorn. Fear them not! The veriest drudgery done for Christ will give you more joy than all the pleasures in Satan's service. Ask them who know. Their only regret they will tell you is this—that they have not been more His drudges, His abject slaves. What was the title Paul delighted to cling to, and characterise himself by? The bond slave of the Lord Jesus; one ready to do the meanest work for the adorable Master; ready to be a door-mat in the house of the Lord. Yes, Christ's slaves are better off than the devil's freemen. To hew wood and draw water in the service of God is more honourable and profitable than to walk in silk attire and chains of gold in the retinue of Satan. “Happy are they whom God will use as brooms to sweep out His temple, or who tug at any oar where Jesus is embarked.”

And if the place of these Gibeonites was humble it was at the same time useful. This would be a great consolation to them, and would reconcile them to their lot. There is no truer encouragement to any man than the consciousness that his work is useful and indispensable. These Gibeonites were of great service to Israel at once, for their defection made the conquest of Canaan much more easy, and shortened the campaign considerably. Because of this defection a wedge was as it were thrust into the country, separating the tribes of the south from those of the north. Thus the league was for the moment paralysed, a breathing time was given to Israel ; and a splendid base of operations was secured. And all this was attained without striking a blow, and it was speedily followed up by the most brilliant victory of the campaign.

And these Gibeonites continued to be useful. They did their conquerors no harm. They never tempted Israel to idolatry. Their services would be valuable to Joshua in revealing all the resources of the country ; and when the people were finally settled in the land their ultimate usefulness would be most clearly revealed. In the tabernacle service much wood had to be burned, much water had to be employed. This could not be done by the women of Israel, and it was a task distasteful to the men ; but by appointing the Gibeonites to this work the difficulty was met in a way satisfactory to all, and they became in all likelihood the Nethinim who are spoken of later on in the Temple service. That they had a permanent place in connection with the tabernacle is evident, for four hundred years after, when Saul sought to deprive

some of them of their rights, perhaps because they had grown rich, he brought down the wrath of God upon Israel in the shape of a famine three years in succession, and this wrath could only be appeased by the death of seven of Saul's descendants (2 Sam. xxi. 1-9).

Our admission into the house and service of God is for ever. We go no more out. Our Master never changes His servants, nor does He ever deal unjustly by them. Notwithstanding all our faults, He bears with us, He never dismisses us, and will in good time make us perfect in His service to our everlasting honour. Surely the humblest post with such a prospect of promotion, is better than the most profitable whose tenure is precarious, and whose end is eternal degradation.

The place of these Gibeonites was also a hallowed one; their service was sacred. God brought them near Himself, attached them to His tabernacle, sheltered them under His wing. Thus He prevented their oppression, He provided for their instruction, and promoted their elevation. Gibeon was made a Levitical city, and the tabernacle was stationed there for many years during the reigns of David and Solomon. It was there that Solomon offered his great sacrifice and made his famous request for wisdom. Thus the altar of Jehovah was the centre of their service. They were nearer God than many in Israel. During his wanderings David had often envied them. If he thought of the sparrows and the swallows who built their nests beside God's altars, often would he think of the privileges of these Gibeonites.

To be near God is the highest privilege and the

chief joy of the renewed heart. And we come near to God just as we make the Cross of Christ the centre of all our service. These Gibeonites knew nothing but that altar and its necessities of wood and water ; we should know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There is a true agnosticism as well as a false, and here it is. To sit beside that cross and keep watch is perfect bliss and perfect service. The doorstep of God's house is a happier resting-place than the downy couch in the gilded pavilion of royal sinners.

Still further, these Gibeonites had a hopeful place in Israel, and that was a great advantage. However humble the place may be, if it is useful we should be satisfied ; if it is permanent as well as useful we have additional cause for thankfulness ; if in addition to that it is fitted to make us better and happier, how contented ought we to be ; and if furthermore there is a prospect of rising to greater honour, surely we have all that heart could desire. Now such a hopeful outlook as that was put before the Gibeonites. In the service of such a Master they might well expect to rise, and they did. Ismaiah, one of David's mighty men, was a Gibeonite. Melatiah, a builder of the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, was another. These are instances recorded to show how they prospered and rose in Jehovah's service. Ah ! how many of these Gibeonites have good cause to thank God for that humble service assigned them ; now no longer hewers of wood and drawers of water, they sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of their Father.

In England it is thought a great matter to be recognized in any way as connected with the Royal House. The official appointment to such a position may fre-

quently be seen framed and glazed and placed conspicuously in the window. The fact is noted in the gold letters on the sign, on every bill, and notice, and advertisement that is sent from the establishment. They strive to let no one forget or be oblivious of the fact. They find that it is profitable to do so. Much more laboriously should we in all things make it plain whose we are and whom we serve. Holiness to the Lord should be inscribed on all our possessions. "A servant of the Lord Jesus" we should consider our most honourable designation. Yea, if need be let us emblazon on our every deed the words, "Hewers of wood and drawers of water to the Lord Jesus." His service is always profitable, is full of hope. He never changes His servants except to raise them higher, till at last He says to each, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

XXII.

TO ARMS! TO ARMS!

“ Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon : for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.”—JOSH. x. 4.

THE greatest poet of Greece has sung in stately numbers the deeds of heroes whom his race adored. We listen to their counsels, we hear their battle shouts, we see their awful blows. They live and move before us in the glowing page. Yet after all, this plain, unvarnished tale depicts with more fidelity and power, the progress and results of a conflict, the most sublime in its accompaniments, that this earth has ever seen.

In this tenth chapter of Joshua we have recorded not only one of Joshua's most brilliant victories, but one of the world's greatest battles ; a struggle surpassing in importance and interest Issus or Arbela, Marathon or Cannae, and affecting to an incalculable extent the religious and political, the moral and the material, welfare of mankind. The chapter is a short but vivid drama, crowded with intensest action. It shifts rapidly from scene to scene of marvellous energy, and culminates in accompaniments of overwhelming sublimity and in effects of vast importance.

First we hear the summons of Adoni-zedek to his southern confederates, now that the larger league is

impossible through the defection of the famous Gibonites. We hear his shout “To arms ! To arms ! Avenge this treachery !” Then follows the steady muffled tramp of armed men converging upon Gibeon. Then the keen cry for help rends the air—“ Slack not thy hand from thy servants ; come up to us quickly and save us, and help us.” And now there is the quick, brave, chivalrous response of Joshua ; the hurried midnight march ; the impetuous charge at day-break ; the shock of battle ; the clash of swords ; the shouts and cries of combatants ; the reeling, broken, scattered ranks of the Canaanites. Then comes the disorderly and unavailing flight ; retreat it could not be called. Panting, the hosts of Jehovah follow the flying foe ; first up the rocky limestone road to Beth-Horon the Upper ; then more swiftly down the rough and slippery western steeps to Beth-Horon the Nether. As they descend—a besom of destruction—the sky is darkened, the wind howls down the gorges, the lightnings flash, the thunder rattles volley after volley, and like Heaven’s artillery, the deadly hail is hurled upon the fugitives, working greater havoc than the sword. Then, to crown all, there is the mysteriously lengthened day ; the awful retribution on the kings ; the subjugation of their country, so complete that through all the southern land, from that decisive day, “None moved his tongue against any in Israel.”

First of all we listen to the summons—“ Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon : for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.” Notice from whom the summons comes. From Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem. This is a strange thing. From this man’s name, Lord of Right-

teousness, and from his heritage, Jerusalem, we would have expected something very different. He is certainly the successor, probably the descendant, of Melchizedek. Here is a man who bears the best of titles, but is, alas! unworthy of it. Nothing could be better than his name; few things are worse than his fame. Here we have a bad cause bolstered up with a good name. How different is this man from that great predecessor whose title he inherits. Melchizedek was seen at the head of his people coming out to bless the victorious Abraham, and to cheer him with refreshment of bread and wine. Adoni-zedek is seen at the head, not only of his own people but of his confederates, resisting the victorious sons of Abraham with all his might. Melchizedek was priest of the Most High God, and in perfect accord and sympathy with Abraham, the friend of God. Adoni-zedek is given over to idolatry, and, blinded and hardened, defies the armies of the living God. Surely this land has become utterly corrupt since such a transformation has been wrought. If the successor of Melchizedek has so degenerated as to become the leading foe of Israel, it is high time for God to separate a people to Himself. Melchizedek four hundred years before received tithes of all that Abraham had. Adoni-zedek, because his name is a misnomer and a lie, must bow his neck under the feet of Abraham's children, and be smitten with the sword of Joshua. His body must be hung upon a tree in the degradation of a felon, and then cast, a hateful carcase, into the cave where he had hid; another cursed sepulchre like Achan's, with great stones piled at its mouth.

Learn from this sad lesson that piety is not hereditary. The descendants of the righteous may be a

wicked seed. We do not believe that this is the rule ; indeed, the very fact that this strikes us as sad and strange proves this ; yet let no one ever dream that he is safe because related to the great, the noble, the worthy, the honoured in the annals of the kingdom. The grandson of Moses became the minister of a false religion, for a bit of bread (*Judges xviii. 30*) ; * and this successor of Melchizedek is the head of the first organized opposition that Joshua encountered. Instead of being led to imitate his pious predecessor by the example of Gibeon, he is roused to fury by it.

This is a sad thing. A noble ancestry is not a thing to be despised. It is unwise and ungrateful to ignore the records and the glories of the past. In the formation of character and the regulation of conduct, few influences are more legitimate or potent than those which spring from the remembrance of a noble ancestry. To resolve in the strength of God that the glory of the old family name shall never be tarnished through our fault, that we will be the worthy sons of noble sires, is a holy ambition, a mighty stimulus to everything that is true, and noble, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. Therefore, for the heir of a great and honourable name to be indifferent to the past, to disregard, despise, or depreciate its most glorious and cherished memories, to drag it in the mire and make it the sport of swine, is to cover himself with unspeakable shame, and present a spectacle sufficient to make angels weep. Let us see that we honour and hold fast all that is noble and good in the past.

This is also a dangerous thing. The opposition of

* The correct reading of this verse is “Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Moses.”

those who have thus fallen is always most dangerous. None are so bitter and remorseless, so vehement and virulent, so venomous and subtle, as renegades. Adoni-zedek was leader in this attack upon Gibeon. He was the heart and soul, the head and hand of this coalition of the five kings. It was at his instigation and under his leadership that they concentrated their armies against the Gibeonites. So has it always been. There has never arisen a more bitter and dangerous opponent to Christ's people than the apostate Church of Rome. Its hatred is perpetual, implacable, subtle. Like Adoni-zedek it bears a good name, but it is embarked in a bad cause. Its action in the early days of its history was like that of Melchizedek. No Church was more vigorous, more spiritual, more evangelical, more charitable, more faithful to the truth, more helpful to others. The Church of Rome was a very Melchizedek, a succourer of many. Now what is it? It bears the old name, slightly modified as in the case before us, but is it possessed of the same spirit? Nay! nay! It is Melchizedek no more. How long, oh! how long, has it been Adoni-zedek, with the blood of God's saints on its gaudy skirts, ready, always ready, to head the assault against the truth of God and the God of truth. How relentless, how implacable, has it proved itself, in seeking to crush out of existence those who forsake it. And yet, forsooth, it would make us believe that inasmuch as it has a good name and a good descent, therefore all men are bound to submit. The Pope, we are told, is the successor of the apostles, sits in Peter's chair, is the Vicar of Christ, therefore we are bound to obey him, and we are guilty of deadly sin if we do not.

As well might Adoni-zedek argue—I am the successor

of Melchizedek. I sit on his throne, I reign over his people. To him Abraham gave tithes, therefore come, ye Israelites ; if ye are indeed the true children of Abraham do me the same homage as ye did to my predecessor. Bow at my feet, acknowledge my superiority, submit to my decisions, or resist at your peril. How absurd would such assumptions have seemed in the mouth of Adoni-zedek ; but is the miserable figment of apostolic succession any better ? Adoni-zedek had indeed better ground, on which to found an argument for patriarchal succession, than any pope or presbyter has to found a claim to apostolic succession. Yet how many in these days are taken in by these false pretensions and sophistical talk ; and how many more, by culpable indifference and misnamed charity, give countenance to such evils ! How many modern statesmen are like the four kings led by Adoni-zedek ! They do not, perhaps, believe in the claims of the papacy, but they think it is to their interest to keep good friends with it and forward its plans. "The Papacy is a power, but it is a power of darkness. It sees its own way and knows its own mind better than the statesmen who fawn upon and flatter it, apparently from sheer moral cowardice, in the fear of being considered illiberal in religion. The signs of the times bode trouble, and perhaps the present generation of Protestants may have to learn the meaning of their own name in a way far from pleasant. This is an age that plumes itself on its own wisdom. But it is not flattering to the intellectual pride of the age that one of its great movements is towards a system which is at once an irrational superstition and an unmitigated tyranny."

Notice to whom Adoni-zedek's message was sent.

It was not sent to all the members of the great national league. That was impossible, because the submission of the Gibeonites had split the confederacy into two unequal parts. Instead of one vast army marching to crush the invader, there must now be two; one in the south, the other in the north. That of the south is smaller, therefore more easily set in motion; and it is also placed nearer the centre of attack. Thus we see how God has restrained the wrath of the enemy and deprived him of half his might. Even so all coalition against Him must fall in pieces. Transgressors are always lacking in cohesion. Therefore let not those fear who feel themselves no match for the enemy. God can confound all his counsels, overturn all his plans, and take away all his might.

It was to Gibeon that Adoni-zedek summoned his confederates. Thus his enmity was manifested against their defection. The five kings were determined to punish them for their disloyalty, for their base betrayal, as they would call it. But surely their enmity was also directed against Jehovah. These Gibeonites had taken shelter under His wing. These five kings were determined to drag them from that shelter and execute vengeance on them. Thus their march against Gibeon was a most daring denial of God's sovereignty and God's power. Who is Jehovah that we should fear Him? Who is the God that can save you from our wrath? Thus they said by this siege of Gibeon.

Still this summons of Adoni-zedek betokens fear. It is to some extent the blustering of a bully who is at heart a craven. We know this, for we are told that "When Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it, as

he had done to Jericho and her king, so had he done to Ai and her king ; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them ; that they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty." Therefore because they fear they do not come alone. They keep their courage up by company.

How many are like them. They do fear when spiritual truths are brought before them, when God's judgment stares them in the face ; yet they try to find comfort in the thought, "Well, if I am lost a great many will be badly off." Ah ! friend, that will be no comfort. If you put your finger in the fire, will the company of your greatest friends destroy the pain ? Was it any comfort for these kings to be in the cave together, when that dark shelter became their prison ? Yea, would not their mutual upbraiding and common fears make them all the more miserable ? Was it any comfort to have company when their necks were bowed under the heel of Joshua's captains ? did it not rather add to their humiliation ? Was it any comfort to have company when they were beheaded and their corpses hung dangling side by side on five neighbouring trees ? Nay ! nay ! It is a vain thing to banish fear by such thoughts. Such a fear as that works destruction ; because being accompanied by a rebellious heart and a darkened mind it led to union against God.

Hatred against the Gibeonites is a very distinct characteristic of Adoni-zedek's message. They are furious against these men. They look upon them as false friends ; as traitors deserving the most condign

punishment. They cannot afford to lose such powerful allies. They cannot afford to jeopardise their combination with the north. Yet, after all, what right had they to be thus angry with their old friends ? Had not the Gibeonites a right to have a mind of their own, especially in a matter that concerned their very existence ? Surely this little republic could have its own policy and carry it out as it thought best. If it concludes a treaty with Joshua, what right have others to complain ? If it has lost faith in the gods of Canaan, and believes that all opposition will be useless and destructive, why should they be despised and hated ?

But the human heart remains the same. When the sinner turns from his rebellion and humbles himself before God, then is the time for the wrath of man to be revealed. This hatred is most unreasonable, for, like these Gibeonites, the penitents in throwing down the weapons of their rebellion set an example which it is the highest wisdom to follow.

The cunning and the impiety of these Canaanites are also revealed by this confederation. They will prevent further defection ; they will gain one of the most important strongholds in the land ; they will make the old league possible. Thus they displayed their craft. And in doing so they proved their impiety. They have evidence on a large scale of God clemency as well as His might ; not one woman and her household, but one whole people, have been received under the shelter of Jehovah's wing. Surely then they should have availed themselves of such clemency. But no ! They harden themselves against all submission. They deliberately challenge the might of Him before Whom

the mighty Gibeonites have humbled themselves in the dust. It may be that, knowing the purpose of Joshua, his terrible commission to exterminate them, root and branch, they misinterpreted Joshua's leniency ; they argued from this reception of the Gibeonites that he was weak and fearful, and uncertain of the result. It may be so, but certain it is that they harden themselves to their destruction.

The revelation which God now makes of Himself in these days is one of unmixed goodness and mercy. His grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. For this, all things continue as they were. The hour of judgment is deferred. What shall we say to these things ? “Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance, but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up with thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render unto every man according to his deeds.”

XXIII

HELP! HELP!

“Come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us.”—JOSH. x. 6.

THE chapter opens with a cry from Jerusalem, the summons of Adoni-zedek—“To arms! To arms!” Here we have another and a very different cry, a cry from Gibeon; a cry to Joshua for help.

This cry accordingly suggests, to begin with, THE TROUBLE OF THE GIBEONITES. They are in sore straits. Floods of furious men compass them round, and it looks as if they were to be utterly swept away. They cannot well exaggerate the magnitude of that danger which threatens them. We have seen the origin of all this trouble. These men have made peace with Joshua, and that is quite sufficient to give deadly offence to Adoni-zedek and his neighbours. They will not spare these turncoats. If Joshua’s sword is sheathed, their sword is sharpened for a sore slaughter. And how quickly did this trouble come. Scarcely had they concluded their league with Joshua than their enemies were on them. The news of their submission spread like wildfire, and kindled inextinguishable hate in the hearts of all who heard it. They did not sit still to deliberate. They did not waste time by calling a council. With headlong enmity and swift resolves

these kings will come like a whirlwind to scatter and destroy their former allies.

What a vivid picture of spiritual truth have we here ! "He that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." Do you make your peace with God ? that instant, and by that act, you are at war with Satan. Heaven may rejoice and ring all its bells, the angels may be glad over one sinner that repenteth ; but Satan rages, and marshals all his emissaries in hot haste to launch them against his devoted head. No sooner is the treaty of salvation signed than the infernal hosts are rallied. The ink is scarcely dry before he begins his attack. Old friends become new enemies. A man's foes are often those of his own household. There are five in one house, three against two, two against three. The father is against the son, and the son against the father ; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. When we come into such trouble, let us not think that a strange thing has befallen us. It is the common fate of God's children, from the highest to the meanest, and to the end of time. Though the Captain of Salvation is the Prince of Peace, He has come not to send peace on the earth but a sword ; and so will it be till every enemy is cast out and all flesh shall own Him Lord.

Therefore, if you have left the world, be not surprised when trouble comes, as if a strange thing had befallen you. Our Lord has told us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And as it was with the Gibeonites, so with us, it is a life-and-death struggle. As their national existence was bound up in it so is our spiritual. If we are overpowered in this conflict we are utterly lost. Hark the cry of one who knew the

meaning of this perhaps more than any—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" The struggle is momentous.

These Gibeonites felt this attack all the more dangerous because it was the onset of men with whom in the past they had been on such intimate terms. These five kings marching in hot haste to destroy them were familiar with all their ways. They had taken their advice in planning their fortifications. Often had they openly discussed with them all matters pertaining to their safety; fully had they unburdened their difficulties; proudly had they revealed their expedients. Often had these very men passed within their gates, walked round their walls, marked their towers, counted their mighty men, examined their weapons, criticised their artillery. All their conditions and resources were as well known to these five kings as to themselves. And the remembrance of these things made this attack all the more formidable. The arsenals of Germany are guarded, even to rudeness, against the inspection of curious eyes; and England has often been blamed for opening Woolwich arsenal so freely to every stranger, because the information thus obtained might be turned against her. These Gibeonites knew that nothing was hid from these advancing foes, and this added greatly to their trouble.

But what was all the knowledge which the five kings had of the Gibeonites compared with the knowledge Satan has of us? Therefore, how terrible must be his attack. If we are not ignorant of his devices, he is not ignorant of our weakness. In the spiritual war, we fight with one who knows every approach to the soul, every gate through which temptation can come.

He has often counted up all our resources, and can tell them even better than ourselves. He has studied all our defences ; he knows where they are weak and where they are invulnerable. He is intimately acquainted with all our tactics and with every weapon we can use against him. Surely his attack is formidable.

But if this cry suggests the trouble of the Gibeonites, IT ALSO POINTS OUT THEIR RESOURCES. If they are in great trouble they are not without resource, and at once they avail themselves of it. In that hour of distress they remember and make use of their covenant with Israel. Without a moment's delay they dispatch swift messengers to Joshua. He is their only hope. Already the lines of the enemy are encircling their city. With what anxiety therefore do they watch the departure of their messengers, counsel carefulness, urge them to speed. The safety of all depends on the success of their mission. These Gibeonites were mighty men, but they did not depend on their strength. They dwelt in a fortified city, but they did not depend on its walls and bulwarks. They had no confidence in themselves. Their own resources were insufficient. All their confidence was placed in Joshua.

Would that we always showed like wisdom. Would that in the spiritual conflict we had no confidence in the flesh ; for whatever our ability, whatever our integrity of purpose, whatever our strength of character, we are insufficient of ourselves to meet the attack of our great enemy. We are but children in the hands of that hoary veteran the prince of darkness. Sin and Satan are more than a match for the strongest saint.

Are we then without resource? By no means. But as in the case of the Gibeonites, this resource is outside ourselves. As they looked to Joshua so must we look to Jesus. As they depended on that covenant of peace which had been ratified, so must we. As they dispatched runners post haste to Gilgal, so must we send out swift-footed messengers of prayer. Our very existence as saints depends on their success.

Yes, if we have no resources in ourselves we are never without the all-powerful resource of prayer. If we have no wisdom, no strength, wherewith to meet Satan, we may by prayer invoke the wisdom and might of the living God.

Oh to feel the necessity of prayer! It cannot be too strongly insisted on; it cannot be too fully or too clearly revealed. As soldiers of the cross, while urged to put on the whole armour of God and use it well, still all is to be done while "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

We must, like these Gibeonites, lay our court for conflict and trouble. We may find ourselves in as sore straits as those described by David in Psalm xviii. We may feel like a prisoner pinioned for his doom; like a sailor at his wits' end; like a stag at bay; like a bird snared in a net. What resource can such a soul have? That which David had—"In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God." And what was the result? The sublime answer of Jehovah: "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were

too strong for me. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me" (Psalm xviii. 16-19).

Yes! Though hard pressed as David we always have the same resource. Though surrounded like the Gibeonites, Satan can never cut off our communication with Heaven. If Satan knows how to separate us from all outward sympathy and support, he does not know how to destroy the telephone of prayer. If Satan knows how to draw a cordon of devils round us, faith knows how to fill the balloon of prayer and send it floating heavenwards, far above hell's might, to bring Heaven's succour. If Satan can blockade the soul with the awful ironclads of the kingdom of darkness, he cannot close the port of prayer; and faith has never failed to run the black blockade and foil his cruel might. Therefore "Is any among you afflicted, LET HIM PRAY."

Still further, this cry also REVEALS THE EARNESTNESS OF THE GIBEONITES. How keen and piercing is their cry. How urgent is their request. The message was no doubt short, they did not waste their words; but it was full of earnestness. It was the message of men thoroughly roused and anxious. Though short it was very full. They sought to stir up Joshua's energy. "Slack not thy hand," they said. They had seen and heard of evidences of his might, and they felt that it would be all needed. Heavy blows, and many, were called for, if their deliverance was to be wrought. They would also have this help speedily—"Come quickly," they said. Delay would not merely be dangerous, it would utterly undo them. They must have

help at once or not at all. This was no exaggeration, but a correct representation of their necessity. They also acknowledged their absolute dependence on Jehovah. "Save us," is their cry. It is as if they said, "We have no hope apart from you. We are all dead men if you fail us. We know you can save us, and trust you will."

They also manifested faithfulness to Joshua, by the last two words of their message—"Help us." Why were these words added? Men do not indulge in superfluous language at such a crisis. But is not the word "Save" sufficient? Something more is added by the use of the word "Help." "Save" is the word of dependence—"Help" suggests the determination to do what they can. It is as if they said, "While we feel that in our own strength we must be worsted, yet we are determined to make a stand against them. On no account will we come to terms. We will never open our gates to the enemy. We will not even hold parley with him. Till you come, and even if you do not come, we will do the best we can."

Accordingly this shows that they were faithful to their new leader. Had there been any treachery in their hearts; any vacillation as to their course; any dissatisfaction with Joshua's terms; any inclination to break their covenant; any mere superficial and impulsive separation from old friends,—in this emergency they would have sought to make it up with them. Such crafty diplomats as the Gibeonites would have had little difficulty in inventing a plausible excuse for their conduct, to the five kings, had they been so disposed. And, on their side, Adoni-zedek and his friends would have been only too glad to take back the Gibeonites

into their confederation ; and then, when this happy consummation was achieved and they united their forces against the common enemy, they could all afford to have a hearty laugh over the little trick the Gibeonites had played upon Joshua. Was it not as plain as daylight that he was not such a remarkable man after all, but a simple, unsophisticated soul, easily outwitted ? If they had hoodwinked him in this fashion, could they not also overturn his plans ? If they had over-reached him in the council chamber, could they not out-maneuvre him in the field ? If they have beat him with the pen, why not with the sword ? It is very plain that he is no more infallible than themselves.

Thus it is plain that it would not have been a very difficult matter for these Gibeonites to have gone back to their former friends. But no ! They were true to their new relations. Though filled with anxiety, they would not be frightened out of their allegiance. Their policy is straightforward and open. This is one of the best signs these Gibeonites have given of a radical change of heart, of a living faith in the God of Israel. "Help us," they cry, "for whatever are the odds we must fight it out. We are thy servants now, and if we perish we perish facing your foes."

Surely their conduct in this emergency may well be imitated. Oh for like earnestness in crying, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord !" How languid are our prayers. How unconscious are we of danger. It is good for God to open our eyes by trouble, if it leads us to cry like these Gibeonites.

At the outset of his course the Christian is sometimes severely tried. Christian was not very far from home

when he fell into the Slough of Despond; and in this predicament he manifested the same earnestness as these Gibeonites. He was determined to persevere in his new course, for he knew there was no safety behind. Therefore he floundered on, and at last floundered out on the right side of the slough. Poor Pliable was made of softer metal; he was easily discouraged, and quickly returned to the City of Destruction. It was easier work for him than for Christian. It is always an easy matter to go back to the world. A time of trial comes on all, to see if they will be faithful to their new Master; to see if they will go back to Adoni-zedek or stretch out their hands to Joshua. The truly quickened soul may have many and great difficulties, but he acts under them like the Gibeonites. Clouds and thick darkness may surround him. Old lusts and new temptations may assail him. Satan may encamp before the citadel of his soul and hurl all his fiery darts against him. He may be at his wits' end. Nothing but disaster may stare him in the face. But whatever the result, the quickened soul says, "I will not come to terms, I will not yield, I will not haul down the flag of free salvation. Jesus, save me. Jesus, help me. Slack not Thy hand. If I am to perish; if I am to be overcome by sin and Satan, I will perish at Thy feet. If I am to fall I will fall with my face to the hosts of darkness."

Lastly, let us consider THE SUCCOUR OF THE GIBEONITES. Help was sure. Joshua would have belied his name, would have been unfaithful to his covenant, would have been untrue to his nature, if he had not hastened to their relief. And help came speedily. Joshua lost not a moment. Whenever he received

the message he gave orders for the army to be up and away. Trust on the part of the helpless is one of the strongest and most stimulating appeals to a true and tender nature, especially when it is coupled with tokens of fidelity. Help also came in time. Joshua was not too late. The Gibeonites did not become a prey ; they had cause to rejoice over a great deliverance. They had new and striking proof of the wisdom of their submission, a new lesson in Jehovah's power and faithfulness, a new incentive to holy obedience.

Do we in every extremity cry to God ? Help must come. God never said to any, "Seek ye my face," in vain. If we have groaned in agony of soul, "O wretched man that I am!" we shall also shout in tones of triumph, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory." Help comes speedily. When the Church or the believer is stirred up to pray like these Gibeonites succour is near ; the time of triumph has come. Let us then stir up our souls to give Him no rest till He makes bare His holy arm, till He stirs up His strength and might and saves us. Help always comes in time. Jesus, like Joshua, is never too late. If He tarries there is good reason for it. It is always for our good. It is so in Providence. When He allows our way to be hedged in, difficulties to beset us, troubles to gather ; when He does not grant immediate deliverance ; when He tarries far from Bethany and a great cloud gathers over the holy, happy home, Lazarus sickens, dies, is buried, why is it ? It is not because He is ignorant. It is not because He is indifferent. It is not because His feet are laggard. It is because He knows the time, His own resources, and the Father's purpose. It is to show depth of compassion,

fulness of grace, and riches of power unspeakable. He may come when Lazarus is laid in the grave, but He never comes too late. Let us remember this in every time of trouble—"Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, *yea, the set time,* is come" (Psalm cii. 13).

He is never too late in history. The world had a long time run its course before He came. Why? Because that time was set. The dark pre-Adamite cycles passed away before His name was spoken on the earth. Four thousand years of history slowly evolved, and the centuries passed away with their generations, ere He appeared. But though He came late, He did not come too late. He came at the set time. "In the fulness of time God set forth His Son."

He has promised to come back again, and depend upon it He will not come back too late. Scoffers may ask, "Where is the promise of His coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were?" The Church is twitted with the absence of Jesus, as the beleaguered Gibeonites may have been with that of Joshua. What does it matter when we have His word, "Behold, I come quickly." Yes, He is coming, coming quickly. Never at this last appointment of His love will He be too late. Again, at the "set" time, a time kept secret in the heart of the Father, He shall appear. What though 1,800 years have passed away? nothing will divert Him from His purpose; nothing will prevent His appearing. "Amen," therefore we say, "Amen, even so, in Thy good time, for that is quickly, come, Lord Jesus."

And notice, in conclusion, that it may be said of these Gibeonites that they were twice saved. First

they were saved from the wrath of God; then they were saved from the wrath of their enemies. So we are saved from the wrath of God and from the wrath of Satan. The Gibeonites were saved by faith, for they trusted in Joshua and in the God of Israel. They were saved by works, for they determined to oppose Adoni-zedek or die. They were saved by hope, for they looked to Joshua for succour and were not disappointed. So we are saved by faith when we fall at the feet of Jesus and put our trust in Him. We are saved by works, when in the strength of God we wrestle against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. We are saved by hope when we look for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour. The Gibeonites were saved by coming to Joshua in their fear of judgment. They were saved by Joshua coming to them and extricating them out of all their trouble. So we are saved by coming to Jesus. The instant we fall at His feet we receive the salvation of our souls. And we are saved by Jesus coming to us; for it is written: "To them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

XXIV.

COURAGE!

“And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear them not : for I have delivered them into thine hand ; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.”—JOSHUA x. 8.

ON the eve of a great engagement, a wise leader often rouses the enthusiasm of his followers by a few well-chosen words. We know how the message of Nelson, before the battle of Trafalgar, stimulated every man in his fleet to do his utmost ; and not only so, but it has also come ringing down the years that intervene with telling effect on every noble heart in great emergencies. God deals with His servants after the same fashion ; therefore, here, before Joshua passes forth to the rescue of the Gibeonites, he gives them words of cheer. This was good, for Joshua and Israel, in view of the memorable fight before them ; and it has been, and will remain to the end of time, a stimulus to all who follow them in allegiance to the same Great Leader.

Notice when God gave this encouragement. It was when Joshua had resolved to set out to the help of the Gibeonites. He may not actually have started, but the preliminary orders had been given, and in all probability this Divine message had been received, when his subordinates had been hurrying through the camp marshalling the men-at-arms. There is no evidence

that Joshua asked for or even expected such encouragement. He felt bound to do his duty, to keep faith with the Gibeonites, and while in the act of responding to their cry, this encouragement came. The very fact that this cheering word was unsolicited made it doubly sweet. It was the spontaneous commendation of a Father, delighted with the faithfulness of His child, and therefore it infused a brighter hope and a mightier energy into the heart of Joshua.

We may have similar experiences. When we walk in the path of duty we may always reckon on the Divine encouragement. Even though it leads into trouble and thick darkness, this remains sure. Paul may be exposed to all the fury and craft of the Jews at Jerusalem ; it may seem as though he would be torn in pieces in the Sanhedrim, or assassinated by his sworn and secret enemies. But all their wrath is restrained and their plans frustrated. In that hour of trial the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer." And though we may be vouchsafed no like vision we may depend on like support. If we go to God's work with good will, however hard it may be, and whoever may oppose, we may always count on the good will and the good word of God, and surely that ought to suffice. How encouraging, how comforting, how strengthening, is the answer of a good conscience towards God.

Notice, also, the terms of this encouragement now given. They were very clear. They had no particle of ambiguity. They present a marked contrast to those heathen oracles, which, after infinite pains, were received by those who were anxious concerning their fate, in the doubtful conflict before them. In such

cunning messages there was always a mysterious vagueness, a studied ambiguity, which left its recipient in doubt. Here it was not so. God, as it were, says to Joshua, "Doubt not the goodness of your cause; dread not the greatness of the enemy; fear not the result; all will be well." And in this glorious assurance Joshua set forth.

How the healthy soul rejoices in certainty! How freely does God delight to give it! False religions of every hue delight in uncertainty; yea, most, if not all of them, are nourished by it. There would be little use for them if it were removed, and, therefore, as a matter of self-preservation, they are careful to nourish and cherish doubt and fear and perplexity. The Church which loudly vaunts its infallibility still preaches a gospel of uncertainty; it assures all its votaries that never in this life, can be known the issues of the fight. It hurls an anathema at the head of every one who asserts that he can know assuredly in this life that he is saved. Even when their own pope dies, though he is the Vicar of Christ, the infallible successor of Peter, they confess that they do not know his fate, and must use all available means to effect the release of his soul from purgatory. And what says one phase of the Rationalism of the day? It tells us that no certainty in regard to anything spiritual is possible. What are the disciples of Agnosticism, but men who try to believe that they believe nothing, and then have doubts about it? And how many who profess to be ministers of the gospel delight in a dim religious light in which nothing can be clearly defined! They believe anything they like, and nothing they can tell, so as to let ordinary mortals understand. Their

teachings remind one of nothing so much as a sacred relic, in the shape of a dirty little phial, of which we have heard. In that phial, we are told, is preserved some of the darkness that fell on the land of Egypt by the hand of Moses. Even so the effusions of these apostles of the Church of the holy ambiguity are but bottled Egyptian darkness. All such uncertainty is of the devil. It has to do with that darkness which God has dissipated by the light of truth and life. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. And what comfort can these men give to earnest workers in the spiritual sphere? They would have them go forward to the great fight with nothing better than the answer of an antiquated heathen oracle. How much better to go as Joshua did, with hearts resting in the sure promise that cannot fail, "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

And the fact that the words Joshua now heard were familiar to his ear, phrases repeated again and again, made this assurance doubly sweet. God is dealing with him now as He has graciously done in all the past; and every repetition and new fulfilment of a promise adds to its value. For the old promise has been tried and tested again and again, and proved to be sufficient. As Joshua listened to these words, all his past experience would tend to strengthen and encourage his heart. He could not fail to remember how gloriously God had fulfilled that promise during the past. Every day's experience was a proof of its power and of its truth; therefore its present repetition would be a strong encouragement. It is good when we have such experience as Joshua; when we have not only a true word, but one which in our own experience we have tried and proved to be sufficient for every emergency.

With what confidence can we commend it to others ; with what comfort can we rest on it when new occasion rises. The promises that we have tried and proved are by far the most precious.

Therefore notice next the effect that this encouragement has upon Joshua. It fills him with new energy. God has said, "I have delivered them into thine hand : there shall not a man of them stand before thee." Does such an assurance make Joshua slacken his hands, take his ease, and countermand his orders ? Does he argue from this promise, "It is ordained that these men will fall into my hands, therefore I may sit down and do nothing ?" Never ! This assurance only serves to make him more prompt in his commands, more energetic in his movements, more eager for the fight. The clearest assurance of success does not do away with the use of means, rather is it a sharp spur to make the most of them. Joshua, though thus assured, yea, because thus assured, acts as if everything depended on his energy and the swiftness and strength of his attack. And so in a very important sense it did.

Some tell us that it is dangerous to preach assurance ; that such a doctrine if accepted will make men careless in their walk and idle in their work ; that there will be little desire left to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Now, it may freely be granted, that such is the desperate wickedness of the heart, that it can turn the grace of God into lasciviousness ; and great is the woe that must overwhelm all such. Woe to Joshua if after this encouragement he had sat still. But while this may be acknowledged, we must also declare that it is not the normal or usual outcome. Contrariwise, as in the case before us,

assurance of success is the best incentive to energy. No child of God should rest content without "Assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost." He should be most thankful if, as in the case of not a few, he gets hold of it at the very beginning of his Christian career ; and if he ever loses it he may be certain that it is through his own fault ; and he must bear the blame and endure the dejection and feebleness that are sure to follow, till he comes back to the old place through confession of his sin. When the moon rose that night, clear and calm, it shone on the hills of Canaan, lighting up the path of these gallant and true warriors, hastening their footsteps and bringing them more swiftly on the foe. Even so the calm clear orb of holy assurance shines down from heaven upon the believing heart, and, guided and cheered by its silver beams, he moves more swiftly forward to the fight of faith.

But we may not only trace the effect of this promise in the energy with which it filled Joshua and his soldiers, but also in that marvellous prayer which rose to his lips in the great crisis of the fight that ensued. It is this great promise of God which justifies and explains that great prayer of Joshua. Joshua "Spoke to the Lord" on that day, and his words were wonderful. His prayer was very short, but we are startled by its boldness ; yea, where can we find a parallel to it ? Whoever, before or after, prayed after this manner—"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon" ? The prayer was public, therefore Joshua risked all his reputation on its answer. The prayer was humble. He had no desire to parade his power ; he had no need to win the allegiance of Israel.

His one thought was the perfect fulfilment of that work which by this promise God had said would be accomplished. God had spoken. His power and glory are pledged to the fulfilment of that word. Can He not perform? What is the weakness of nature? He can infuse it with a strength which will enable it to continue and end the work He has appointed. And what is the course of nature? It is all for His glory, according to His good pleasure now, and therefore He can change and modify it as He pleases. Accordingly, emboldened by this promise, with wonderful elevation of faith, and under the special impulse of the Holy Ghost, he spoke as if the hosts of heaven were as completely under his control as the hosts of Israel. He commanded the sun and moon as he did his captains. How sublime is the faith that rests without a question on the assurances of God! As the promise of God was made by Joshua the basis of action, so now was it made the foundation of prayer. God gave Joshua a large promise, and Joshua laid before God a large prayer. Thus both God's power and Joshua's faith were magnified and made honourable.

In like manner may we make use of all God's promises; and we only prove our unbelief by leaving them a dead letter. Who can over-estimate the value of prayer, who can put a limit to its power? Remember how it is written—"There came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I

be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil ; and he departed out of him : and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out ? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief ; for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place ; and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Did we believe in the promises of God as firmly as Joshua, we would be able more closely to imitate his prayers. Men make difficulties here where the simple soul can find none. As a living father can answer the requests of his children, so the Lord can hear and answer the prayer of His people. And He answers every prayer addressed to Him ; not always in the same way, but always in the best way. Sometimes He says "Yes!" and sometimes He says "No!" But whether "Yes" or "No" His answer is perfect love. "When the sun rises there is light. Why, I do not know. There might have been light without the sun, and there might have been sun that gave no light, but God has been pleased to put these two things together—sunrise and light. So whenever there is prayer there is a blessing. I do not know why. There might have been prayer without a blessing, for there is in the world of wrath ; and there might have been a blessing without prayer, for it often is sent to some who sought it not. But God has been pleased to make this a rule for the government of the moral and spiritual universe, that there shall be the answer to prayer."

Now notice, lastly, the fulfilment of this promise. No doubt the good generalship of Joshua and the valour of his soldiers had much to do with it. They marched with swiftness, they laid on with might and main, they never paused in the pursuit, yet all that they did was obscured by the wonderful interposition of God. Joshua and Israel did what they could, and yet God did all. Though it is written that Joshua went up from Gilgal all night, and came upon them suddenly, it is also written that the Lord discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them up the long ascent from Gibeon to Upper Beth-Horon, and down the "Rough rocky road, sometimes over the upturned edges of the limestone strata, sometimes over sheets of smooth rock, sometimes over loose rectangular stones, sometimes over steps cut in the rock," till they reached the rich agricultural plain of the Shephatiah.

Two miracles indicate this Divine interposition, both marvellous and significant, yet one was more astounding than the other. First we are told of the great shower of hailstones which, as the Amorites were rushing down the long descent from Beth-Horon the Upper to the western plains, swept down upon them. Heaven's artillery opened against them in their flight. The hand of God was plainly seen in this event. "It came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-Horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

Nothing could be more calculated to fill the hearts

of these Canaanites with fear. Even Pharaoh, after the storm of hail, which smote every herb and broke every tree, was so moved that he said, "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." There is something so appalling to human nature in such an event, that it is fitted to rouse the most torpid conscience. All who have had any experience of such a storm speak of it in similar terms. One writer says: "It was the most awful and terrific scene that I ever witnessed, and God forbid that I should be exposed to such another. The scene lasted perhaps five minutes; but it was five minutes of the most awful feeling I ever experienced. When it passed over we found the surrounding hills covered with masses of ice, the trees stripped of their leaves and limbs, and everything looked desolate. We proceeded on our course, however, and arrived at our destination, drenched and awestruck. The ruin had not extended so far as Candalia, and it was difficult to make them comprehend the cause of the nervous and agitated condition in which we arrived. The Reis Effendi asked me if I was ever so agitated when in action? I answered no, for then I had something to excite me, and human means only to oppose. He asked another why he should be so affected, and he replied, 'From the awful idea of being crushed to death by the hand of God with stones from heaven, when resistance would be vain, and where it would be impious to be brave.' Up to this hour, late in the afternoon, I have not recovered my composure; my nerves are so affected that I am scarcely able to hold my pen or communicate my ideas. The scene was awful beyond all description. I have witnessed re-

peated earthquakes : the lightning has as it were played about my head ; I have been in action and seen death and destruction around me in every shape of horror ; but I never before had the feeling of awe which seized me on this occasion, and still haunts, and I feel ever will haunt me." Such a description as that may give us some idea of the panic that must have filled the hearts of the Canaanites on that terrible day when thus exposed to God's wrath. It is well to remember that nature may become one great arsenal for the defence of those that fear God, for the destruction of all His enemies. It was no superstition, but true godliness, which enabled our forefathers to see the finger of God in those storms which swept the great Armada to its doom.

But there was a miracle greater still which revealed the interposition of God in this great battle. So marvellous is this miracle that it has been disputed by many. Attempts have been made to set it aside altogether ; theories have been invented to explain it away, or minimise the wonder to modern scientific minds. Some say that this is only a high-flown figure in a book of good and godly ballads, and that it is not to be taken at all as the record of a literal fact. Others talk learnedly, yet somewhat incoherently, about certain laws of refraction at that time and in that place. Then there are many attempts to explain away the plain meaning of the words. Some delight in verbal quibblings. Others stand like critical inquisitors, and putting sentence after sentence on the rack, smile with delight when their own ideas are shrieked out by the dislocated sentences. After wading through all the shifts and expedients that have been

suggested to minimise or deny this miracle, it will be found far easier just to accept it as it stands. The paltry objection as to the scientific accuracy of the words, "Sun, stand still," may be thought of, when we cease to talk about sun-rise or sun-set, but not till then.

In thinking of this miracle we must remember that to Him who wrought it, "great" and "little" are not to be mentioned. It is all one to God to change the colour of a hair or the course of the universe. This miracle must not be set aside either because it is stupendous or inexplicable. If He created all things by the word of His power, can He not modify all things or anything when it so pleases Him? Does He not govern all things, from the least to the greatest, from the fluttering of a snowflake to the coursing of a star? What is to hinder Him then from changing the relation of all things in an instant, reversing or retarding the machinery He has set in motion and is guiding? If a boy had a ball revolving in the light of a lamp between his finger and thumb, could he not so turn the axis of revolution as to make the light shine for longer or shorter periods on the upper or lower part of the ball? With infinitely more ease could God so govern the revolutions of the globe that, without a jar, the day would be lengthened.

Also there are heathen traditions and poetry which point to some such occurrence as this. There is a Chinese tradition of such a wonder. Herodotus speaks of hearing such a tradition from the lips of Egyptian priests. There are several allusions in Homer which point in the same direction; all are vague but all are interesting.

Moreover, here again the spiritual element must not be ignored. The plagues of Egypt were so ordered as to be so many blows aimed against Egyptian idolatry, and this miracle bears the same appropriate character. The sun and moon, under the name of Baal and Ashtaroth, were the chief deities of the Canaanites. As the gods of the Egyptians were confounded by the wonders wrought by Moses, in bringing Israel out of Egypt; so the gods of the Canaanites were confounded by this wonder wrought by Joshua, in bringing Israel into Canaan. No doubt in going forth against Israel the priests consulted their gods; for this was pre-eminently a religious war: the God of Israel was opposed by the gods of Canaan. Therefore the priests presented offerings in the houses of their gods; they poured out libations before their altars; they solemnly invoked their aid. If the renegade Gibeonites put themselves under the protection of Jehovah, they will put their confidence in Baal and Ashtaroth, and stir them up to manifest their might against Jehovah. This is a fight they think between rival gods, and what gods can be more glorious or powerful than the brilliant sun and his beautiful consort?

Some such thoughts as these must have filled the minds of these Canaanites; therefore think of the effect which such a miracle as is here described, would have on these idolaters. Nothing could be conceived more appalling; nothing more confounding to their belief. The gods in whom they trusted gave them no aid. They looked with unconcern upon their ruin. They left them to perish without aid or pity. Yea, did they not stand still, as if pausing with delight to witness their overthrow, as if pleased to aid their

destroyers ? No kindly darkness wrapped its mantle over them to shield them from the terrible eye and the relentless sword of their enemies. Long after its appointed time to set, their hope and confidence, that glaring sun poured down its beams to point them out to their pursuers and make them a prey ; and all the while its pale consort, the moon, after guiding their footsteps to the attack, stood still, as if anxious to witness their final overthrow.

Sun and moon mocked their fear and laughed at their calamity ; for while they turned a deaf ear to their loudest cries, and remained unmoved by their deepest groans and direst distress, they obeyed at once the august command of their great destroyer, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon." How more effectually could the folly and vanity of their idolatry be condemned ? How more effectually could they and all flesh be rebuked for their impious denial of God's sovereignty ? Where could there be a more potent and appropriate demonstration of the truth of Rahab's confession, "The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and of the earth beneath" ?

How often does God in His adorable Providence render the very objects in which men trust the means of filling them with shame and confusion of face ! How manifestly was God with Israel. How evident is it that "The Lord reigneth." Israel needed that assurance, and we need it too. Whatever may come to pass from year to year, from century to century, He and He alone is guiding the world and the Church to that goal which He has foreknown and appointed. This is the sheet-anchor of all our hopes for humanity. The

sun and stars in their courses, distress of nations, wars and rumours of wars, all nature in its widest bounds, all Providence in its most complicated evolutions,—all, all are working together to fulfil His purposes. And Christ is Head over all things to the Church. Therefore “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret.”

XXV.

FOES UNDER FOOT.

“Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings.”—JOSH. x. 24.

THE fight is finished. The pursuit is over. The sun and moon resume their courses. Now occurs a solemn and deliberate act of judgment. Joshua has collected his army at Makkedah. It is time to relieve the guard whom he had placed at the mouth of the cave where the kings had sought shelter. He gives orders that the great stones should be rolled away. And now, before assembled Israel, the guard enters the dark prison-house, and the five kings, Adoni-zedek, Hoham, Piram, Japhia, and Debir are brought out, pale and trembling, to meet their doom. When they are brought forth and stand before Israel, Joshua gives the command to his captains, “Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings.” Then the captains leave their places, and before all the people these kings of Canaan lie prostrate in the dust, while Joshua’s captains put their feet upon their necks. As this is being done, Joshua turns to the people, and echoing Jehovah’s own encouragement to himself says, “Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.” Then, when this impressive scene was finished, these kings were slain, and as accursed their bodies

were hung upon five trees till the setting of the sun, and then they were cut down and cast into the cave wherein they had been hid, and great stones were laid in the cave's mouth. Thus we see how, when the God of all the earth rises to judgment, the splendour of the noble, the power of the mighty, the counsel of the wise, the valour of the brave are as nothing ; yea, all glory that is not godly ends in deep disgrace.

This solemn scene reminds us of the mad resistance of these kings. Here is the end of it. And what a contrast is this to that which they had conceived. With what high hopes had they marched away ! What a brave appearance did their great army present ! What terror did they strike into the hearts of the Gibeonites ! But now all their glory is gone ; it was as the flower of grass, and it has been cut down and cast into the oven. All their counsels, long, deliberate, careful though they were, have turned into folly. All their union, wide and hearty though it was, has been vanity. What infatuation possessed them to rise against the might of Jehovah ? Surely they might have known better. When the scales of false confidence fell from their eyes they did know better. In the darkness of that cave they saw more clearly the meaning of God's mighty acts and of their own conduct than they had ever done before. How they must have cursed their folly, how they must have upbraided each other, and most of all, that leader who had most persistently urged them to this course.

As we look on these wretched kings we hear a voice asking in earnest, solemn tones, "Who hath hardened himself against God and hath prospered ?" "Who can resist the arm of the Almighty ?" And again it

says, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Can the clay rebel against the potter? Will the tool lift up itself against the workman? Will worms defy the Almighty? Why, then, oh! why are there found, not a few, but many who still resist Him? Why is it that still there are millions who have heard but not obeyed the gospel, who have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God? Such resistance will turn out to be greater madness even than that of these five kings, and will lead to a severer condemnation and a deeper shame.

This scene also reminds us of the despairing flight of these kings. Finding that resistance was useless, they sought to escape by flight, but this proved also vain. They found that they were pursued by the judgment of the God of heaven as well as by the sword of Joshua. The very gods in whom they had put their trust in going forth make their flight vain. At every step of that headlong race for life, new amazement and new horror fell upon their hearts. They try to keep together, and in this they succeed, but their intercourse can bring no comfort, can work no deliverance. Their despair grows deeper and deeper, till with unspeakable dejection and utter weariness they seek shelter in the dark cave of Makkedah.

The sinner cannot flee from the judgment of God. Many a man has been able to escape the just judgment of his fellows. Many a fugitive from justice, many an outlawed felon, has escaped scot free and laughed at the impotence of human judgment. Though justice is said to have long arms, yet not a few have learned how to get out of its reach. It can never be so with the Divine justice. It rolls forth no empty thunders.

There is no possible escape from its jurisdiction on earth, or heaven, or hell. Its power is an all-present reality, most dreadful to the offender. All flight is vain. It is wisdom that asks, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." Seeing all flight is vain, our only hope is instant and complete submission, if haply the Lord will have mercy on us and spare us for His name's sake.

The scene also speaks of their useless refuge. Their resistance was found to be utterly vain, therefore they had recourse to flight. But flight they found also unavailing, therefore they sought to hide, but this was also vain. By this new device they not only deceive themselves, they actually destroy themselves. That cave which they had chosen for a sure shelter became a fast prison. They separated themselves from their flying followers to avoid the common doom, and this act brought a more public and prominent judgment on their heads. Their hiding there made this solemn and impressive act of judgment possible.

Know that it is as vain to hide from God as to fly from Him. Yet the truth "Thou God seest me" is one not easily learned. Often, as in the case of Hagar, it is only in the hour of dire extremity that the soul

becomes truly conscious of the fact. Nothing is more common or more natural for fallen man than to hide from God. Instinctively we all follow the example of our first parents, who, when they heard the voice of God, went and hid themselves among the trees of the garden. Even in childhood, if unwelcome thoughts of God obtruded themselves how quickly did we learn to bury ourselves in the cave of other and more congenial thoughts and hopes. We did not wish to be reached by the hand of God, nor even looked upon by His eye. And as we grow older and the heart gets more unsusceptible to spiritual realities, how easily can we hide in indifference. How natural it is to let slip everything that has been taught us of spiritual truth, to forget all warnings and admonitions, to become engrossed with the pleasures that lie around, and to forsake the good habits in which we had been trained.

And not a few seek to shelter themselves in hypocrisy. They dream that to make a fair show in the flesh, to maintain an outward profession of religion and to exhibit a decent moral exterior, is to be safe. The Church is the garden of God ; and not a few are hiding from Him among the trees of His own garden. They are not heathen, they are not irreligious, they are not profane. They come to the solemn assembly. They give of their substance to His work. They maintain propriety of conduct, and yet they know not God : yea, they are hiding from Him all the time, and by these very means.

Others are hiding from God in business. From Monday morning till Saturday night they are engrossed in earthly cares, and even on the Lord's day their

heads and hearts are more in their bank-books and ledgers than in their Bibles. And it is all the same whether business be good or bad. Indeed, there is more danger of utter godlessness in the time of the greatest commercial prosperity than there is in the time of the greatest depression. Then the heart is lifted up, and time and sense and riches bulk large in the thoughts ; while holiness and heaven and eternity and God are forgotten.

But though men may for a few moments bury themselves in oblivion of God, they can never hide from Him. All such expedients are but refuges of lies, caves of Makkedah, and will prove the destruction of all who shelter there. Soon the souls who thus hide will be dragged out to the bewildering light, to their shame and ruin.

Have we then no hope ? Is there no refuge for us ? There is. We can never hide from God, but we can hide in God. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." "Thou art my hiding-place" is the cry of every one who has discovered his own exposure and trusted in God's salvation. The Rock of Ages is a sufficient and sure refuge for every sinner who feels himself undone and exposed to wrath on account of sin. Flee, then, to this stronghold, ye prisoners of hope ! While the refuge is open and a hearty welcome is given to every fugitive, hie thee to its shelter ! For the time is speedily coming when even that refuge will be unavailable. Its door will be shut. It is open now, free to all who care to come. As the Cave of Adullam when David dwelt there was free to all the distressed and discontented and indebted ; so now this refuge of

salvation, while Jesus is rejected by men, is free to the greatest sinner. But it will not always be so. When the Master rises up it will be closed for ever, and as these five kings hid themselves from Joshua in that cave, so the kings of the earth and the great men and the mighty men and the chief captains will call upon the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

Here also we behold the utter degradation of these kings. It was far deeper than that of their subjects. As they were ringleaders in this revolt their end was more terrible. The greater the guilt the greater the shame. Some are beaten with few stripes, some with many ; and whether few or many or none, the Judge of all the earth does right. These five kings were put to open shame because of their flagrant opposition to the will of God. They had to bow their necks under the feet of the children of Israel. This was a most significant act. It was no mere barbaric ceremony, prompted by ostentatious pride. It was a picture of the absolute subjection of all to the yoke of Israel. It was a pledge of the perfect conquest of the land ; of the glorious ending of that work which had been so well begun. Therefore, as their feet were on the necks of their foes, Joshua said, " Fear not, nor be dismayed ; be strong and of good courage ; for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight."

This also was written for our encouragement and instruction. All things must be brought into subjection to the true Joshua. To him shall every tongue confess, and every knee bow. Here we have a picture of the triumph which Jesus gives over the power of evil. They who follow Him are not overcome of evil,

they are conquerors in the struggle against sin. Lusts and passions and evil thoughts and desires may be proud and strong and united as these five kings of Canaan. The power of the flesh may be manifested in one and all of our five senses. Our members that are upon the earth may be strong and evil and rebellious. But Jesus gives us power over these things. The struggle, however hard, should always end in the shout of victory. Just as Joshua called his captains to him and said, "Put your feet on the necks of these kings," so Jesus says to all who trust Him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these sins." He does give His people power over sin. His name is Jesus because He does so. However weak we may feel in ourselves, yet in His name we dare deal with the proudest and strongest sin that lurks in our hearts, as Joshua's captains did with these kings. It is our duty and our privilege to do so. Yet alas! how many of God's people are content to live as if no such power were possible. Evil passions and wicked habits are tolerated, and submission to them looked upon as inevitable. That is not Christianity. That man cannot be following Christ who is not putting all spiritual foes under his feet from day to day.

And we have here not only a picture of this daily and oft-repeated triumph over sin which Jesus gives His followers, but also a picture of that ultimate and complete victory over sin and Satan that shall be granted. There were other kings in Canaan besides these five kings, and they gave Joshua and his captains much trouble. Though the victory so far was real and glorious, it was by no means complete. They have faced and overcome these particular foes; but

many more remain. Even so the Christian, though he should and must obtain the victory over all known sin, and keep it ever under foot, learns the longer that he lives that there are other sins which he had not dreamt of lurking in the recesses of his heart. Therefore he lays count for a protracted war. He knows that no one battle, however brilliant, will complete the conquest. Yet he does not go forward with a faint heart to face these new foes. Rather, encouraged by the victories already granted, he goes on with assurance of like triumph. He knows that thus the Lord will do with all the enemies with whom He fights; and he knows that the blessed day is speedily dawning when perfect and eternal triumph will be His; when no speck or stain of sin will defile in any part of His being; when as really as Joshua's captains had these kings under their feet so that word will be fulfilled—"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Meanwhile the agony and persistence and weariness of the fight, as well as its glorious triumphs, are fraught with valuable lessons to every follower of the true Joshua. As has been well said—

“ By sins we feel how low we're lost,
And learn in some degree
How dear that great salvation cost
Which comes to us so free.

“ If such a weight to every soul
Of sin and sorrow fall,
What love was that which took the whole,
And freely bore it all !

“ Oh, when will God our joy complete,
And make an end of sin?
When shall we walk the land, and meet
No Canaanite therein ?

“ Will this precede the day of death,
Or must we wait till then ?
Ye struggling souls, be strong in faith,
And quit yourselves like men.

“ Our great Deliverer’s love is such,
He cannot long delay ;
Meantime, that foe can’t boast of much,
Who makes us watch and pray.”

We must also draw attention to the miserable end of these kings. They were slain and hanged on trees as under God’s curse, and then their carcasses were cast into the cave and a great heap of stones was placed at its mouth, another monument for succeeding generations. This done, the army of Joshua marched into their land and took city after city, most of them with very slight resistance ; and thus their possessions became a spoil and an inheritance to Israel. The whole of Southern Canaan lay at their feet. “ So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings ; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded.” Again the fact that this is a Divine judgment is proclaimed when the results of the first stage in the conquest are summed up. Joshua drew his sword at God’s command ; and whenever or wherever it fell it was the sword of the Lord working His will. Here, as we stand over the dead bodies of these kings, we hear a voice proclaiming, “ So perish the king’s enemies.” In these days men do not like to hear about the judgments of God. They persistently shut their ears to the severe truths about God proclaimed in His Word ; and will listen only to that which is

pleasant. With what they deem a righteous indignation, they will shout against him who proclaims the severity as well as the goodness of God. They will listen to nothing which puts in the future aught that is appalling to the sinner. They would abolish the great white throne, the bottomless pit, the lake of fire and brimstone, the wrath of the Lamb, the slaughter of sinners, the everlasting banishment of the lost, the blackness of eternal darkness. Surely this is the height of folly. Surely it is madness to forget that God's judgments have a past history as well as a future development. The God who gave that commission to Joshua still lives. He has not ceased to exist. He has not given up His claims of righteousness. If thus He once punished sinners, will He now spare us and become a respecter of persons? It cannot be. The fact that such judgments have already swept over the world of the ungodly makes it certain that other waves of like judgment must follow, for the Judge of all the earth will do right. Indeed He Himself has declared that the judgment of the impenitent in these Gospel days will be far more dreadful than that of these Canaanites. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in that coming day of wrath than for those who have rejected His Gospel. There are judgments of God against sin in the past history of the world. In the future history of the world these judgments will again be on the earth. Between the past and the future He has erected the cross. That also is a centre of judgment. Yea, the judgment against sin on the cross is far more perfect than either that judgment which goes before or follows after; for it is a judgment finished, a cup of con-

damnation drunk to the last drop, and that can be said of no other, past or future. Identified with that Victim ; nailed with Him to that cross, cursed in Him with all the curse due to sin, banished with that forsaken Victim in the great darkness, there is no condemnation, no judgment, to them that are in Christ Jesus. And this is the gospel we preach ; this is the salvation which in this hour of grace is free to all who will have it. We would, by all the love which that cross manifests, by all the glory that salvation brings, beseech you to be reconciled to God, to submit to Him as did Rahab and the Gibeonites ; but if you do not, if still you harden your neck against Him, we must also tell you, however harsh you may deem us, however detestable the announcement may seem, that there is nothing before you but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. There is no escape for you. Hear God's own word :—“The mystery of iniquity doth already work : only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish ; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

In these conquests of Joshua we have a faint picture

of the victories of Jesus. However numerous His enemies may be, they will be all scattered as chaff before the wind, as smoke before the hurricane. However mighty they may be, they will bite the dust in terror and dismay. However wise and noble, they will be crushed under His heel. He goes forth conquering and to conquer, to wield the sceptre over all the kings and princes of the earth; for on His vesture and His thigh is this name written: “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” Hark the song of His victorious hosts!—“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.” Hark the sentence He will pronounce over all His foes: “These mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay before Me.” Friend, what will your fate be? Will you hear that sentence, or will you sing that song?

XXVI.

THE OLD CAMP AND THE NEW FOE.

“Joshua returned and all Israel with him unto the camp to Gilgal.”—
JOSH. x. 43.

WHEN Joshua invaded Canaan, its inhabitants, so far as political divisions went, were in a similar condition to that of the Britons on the landing of Julius Cæsar. In the course of this book we read of many kings, but we must remember that the territory over which they reigned must have been very limited. Just as there were four kings within the compass of the county of Kent, so in Canaan there must have been even a greater number within the bounds of such an area.

Again, as the Britons forgot their mutual animosities and fought side by side against Cæsar; as on the North American continent the various Indian tribes rallied round Pontiac in the great conspiracy of 1763, and sought to exterminate the English,—so these Canaanites sought to bring about a grand confederation of all the tribes, in order that Joshua and his advancing hosts might be hurled back into the wilderness whence they came, and remain homeless nomads, like their Bedouin relations.

This confederation, in its widest extent, was rendered impossible by the defection of the Gibeonites. They

were celebrated for their wisdom and prowess, and therefore greatly feared by their neighbours. Their territory lay right in the centre, between northern and southern Canaan ; therefore, when they forsook the national standard and came to terms with Joshua, a wedge was driven into the solid mass of organised opposition, and the confederation was split into two somewhat unequal parts. Of these the southern was the smaller, and therefore the more easily set in motion. Their headquarters, moreover, were nearer the common foe, for the king of Jerusalem was evidently the leading spirit in the south. Accordingly, Adoni-zedek first took the field against Joshua ; with what result has already been described. He was out-generalled by the military genius of Joshua. He was taken by surprise. His forces were scattered before the irresistible onslaught of the men of Israel. Terrorstruck, and utterly demoralized, forsaken of their gods, and pursued by the wrath of Heaven, they were doomed to destruction. Their cities were taken, their leaders executed, and in a brief space of time the southern confederation was so shattered as to be virtually extinct.

After this brilliant and decisive campaign, which completed the first half of the conquest, Joshua returned to the old headquarters at Gilgal. Not a few modern expositors have suggested that since the declaration of the law at Ebal and Gerizim Israel had encamped at another Gilgal. It seems settled that there was another place of that name not very far from the vale of Shechem. But we fail to discover any good reason why it should be chosen as a new camp in preference to the old one. The march from Shechem to it would

certainly be shorter, but if the women and children marched from Gilgal in the Jordan valley to Shechem, they could with equal ease march back. And there were many reasons in favour of their doing so. It was a fortified camp, where the non-combatants could rest in security while the warriors prosecuted the work of conquest. Through the destruction of Jericho and Ai, it was further removed from any Canaanitish enemy than any point that could be chosen west of Jordan. Situated in that broad deep ditch through which runs the Jordan, it was better protected than the other site supposed. Moreover, it was situated close beside the friendly trans-Jordanic tribes, a point that must not be overlooked. With a regiment of aged veterans and stripling warriors, unfit for the rougher work of conquest, yet well fitted for garrison duty, it would be quite safe from any unforeseen attack.

It must have been a great rest and refreshment for the weary warriors to come to such a camp from time to time. It would be to them a Sabbath amid their arduous labours. What a stimulus would it be to come back to their relatives and friends to recount their successes! What have you done? how have you succeeded? would be the questions of many lips, and thousands of eager ears would drink in the answers. And then they would ask, after the recital of every prodigy, the tale of every victory—"When will your work be done?"

"When will this wondrous war be o'er,
When will you win us homes,
Where Abraham fed his flocks of yore,
Where lie our fathers' tombs,
Where pastures drink the dews of heaven at will,
Where waters kiss the feet of many a vine-clad hill?"

How their patriotism would be aroused by such questionings. How eager would they be to fight the good fight and finish their course.

And their piety would be greatly stimulated by periodical returns to such a camp as this. Here first they pitched their tent after crossing Jordan on foot. Here the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Here they rose to the full dignity of their birthright. Here they ate the firstfruits of the land. Here they had the first astounding victory of the war. Therefore at every successive visit they would realize anew that they fought as the hosts of Jehovah, bearing in their bodies the seal of His covenant. And thus they would receive new accessions of spiritual strength and zeal. From this place they would after each visit go more boldly out to deal harder blows against the uncircumcised Canaanites.

And it is the same with us in the war which we wage against the inner and the outer foe. We have our headquarters too, a visit to which should stimulate us even more than a visit to Gilgal did the Israelites. What is our Gilgal? The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That remains always our centre. We should come back to it at all times; not only when driven there by defeat, in order to have shelter, but also after every victory, in order to give thanks.

Let us make the cross our headquarters. Here let us pitch our tent with great delight. Hence let us issue to every conflict. Hither let us always return. Like Paul let our steadfast resolve be, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." Let us tarry there till we rise to the full consciousness of the fact that we are "Crucified with

Christ ;" that the reproach of sin is rolled away ; that we are possessors of a goodly heritage, "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Let us also tarry there while we examine ourselves, applying the sharp flint to our uncircumcised hearts ; purging ourselves from all moral and spiritual assimilation to the world ; purifying ourselves from all that does not become the Divine Presence. Thus shall we maintain faith and a good conscience. Then issuing from such headquarters, so safe, so restful, so hallowed, so purifying, we shall be filled with a holy enthusiasm and unconquerable strength, and march like Israel from victory to victory.

When Joshua had come back to the old headquarters word was brought to him of the gathering of a new foe. This was the most numerous army that had as yet been gathered against him. The teeming population of the north poured forth its thousands. From the slopes of Hermon, from the Sea of Galilee to the coasts of the Mediterranean, away northwards as far as Phoenicia, this army came, "Much people, even as the sand that is upon the seashore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many."

And it was the most powerful, as well as the most numerous army which Joshua had encountered. They have had time to make full preparation for this conflict, to collect their munitions of war, to mass their forces. For the first time in this campaign we hear of war-horses being used, and the war chariots of iron which were such a terror to the ancient infantry.

This army is also better led than any other that had taken the field. Jabin was the commander-in-chief. One of his successors is called king of Canaan (Judges

iv. 2-24), and therefore he would in all likelihood have been the head of the great confederacy. The word "Jabin" is not a name, but a title borne by the kings of Hazor, and signifies "The Wise," just as Adoni-zedek means "Lord of Righteousness." Therefore, as we have seen the religious head of the Canaanites marshalling the southern army; so here we see the wise head of the Canaanites marshalling the northern army. The southern might be called the coalition of the priest; the northern the coalition of the sage.

How graphically is the spiritual experience of the Christian depicted by these conflicts. No sooner is one set of foes subdued than another arises. Truly we are members of the Church militant. How often is the cry raised—

"Your glorious standard launch again
To match another foe."

The Church and the soul must sleep in armour. There is no rest here. There is also a similarity in the kind of opposition which we have to encounter. As the advance of Israel was opposed now by Adoni-zedek and now by Jabin, so the advance of truth is opposed now by apostate Christianity and now by pompous philosophy. The hosts of the sacerdotalist and the hosts of the sage; the thunders of the Vatican and the arguments of the rationalist, are alternately hurled against the truth of God. We have to contend not only against the attacks of will-worship; but also against the oppositions of science falsely so called. If there is apostate Adoni-zedek to lead the south, there is self-sufficient Jabin to lead the north. Superstition and rationalism are the two great enemies of the

Gospel. And it has always been so. When the mind of man sets to itself the task of working out a religious system, it will either elaborate a ritual or develop a philosophy. Hence it will reject with scorn, as weakness and folly, the testimony of the man who says, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be of none effect."

As it is with the Church collectively so is it with the individual. He may lay his account sooner or later to face these two, often in the same order. First comes superstition, with its high-sounding titles, its endless genealogies, its imperious claims, its elaborate ritual, its sensuous will-worship, its irrational bondage. It is resisted, it is overcome. Then comes rationalism, and it cries, "Well done. You have routed these infernal hosts. Now come with us. Finish the work you have so well begun. Cast from you the remaining rags of superstition. Follow the light of Reason. Revelation is an old wife's fable. Accept nothing you cannot prove. Throw overboard the bondage of believing the Bible, of crediting inspiration. Remember the dignity of mind and of the moral sense. Be judge of the Bible, and don't let it be judge of you. Shake off the remaining fetters and be free." Then the sage who argues thus, will, like Jabin, muster whole hosts of imposing arguments. How quickly they come at his bidding; from north, south, east, and west, like the sand that is on the sea shore for multitude. And when he reviews them, how imposing is their array. With pride he points out regiments of geologists, and botanists, and chemists, and naturalists, and philologists, and anthropologists, and metaphysicians, and

logicians, and antiquarians, and critics, and poets, ancient and modern, all the world over. To quote the words of Professor Green :—“We have now reached a juncture when the general sense of the need of infallible guidance in the Scriptures has been somewhat shaken by a growing confidence in man’s powers, and the fact of that infallible guidance has been assailed from the most diverse quarters; when students of physical science claim that the facts of nature are irreconcilable with the Bible account of the creation, the flood, and the dispersion of the human race; when antiquarians affirm that the monumental records of Egypt or of Assyria are in conflict with the alleged facts of the sacred history; when philosophers, who have made a study of comparative religion, deny that there is anything of consequence in the religion of the Bible which does not find illustrative parallels elsewhere, and cannot be accounted for on purely natural principles; when moralists bring into question its solutions of moral problems, and challenge its alleged Divine decisions as indefensible; when socialistic schemers oppose the Bible because it stands in the way of their disorganising theories; and the wayward heart is now as ever restive under its restraints and penalties, and ready to avail itself of any pretext to escape them. The antagonism directed against the Divine infallible authority of the Bible from these and other quarters, while it does not shake the citadel of its strength, nevertheless has by persistent repetition had its influence on the public mind. Doubts and insinuations are freely uttered by those who venture on no positive assertions discrediting the Scriptures. And even professed friends of the Bible

have said that there must be some abatement of its claims and some modification of its defences, that something must be yielded to its antagonists in the hope of saving what remains." "See," in short, says the Jabin of modern unbelief, "See that splendid army. All the intellectual thews and sinews of the world are there. The snorting war-horses paw the yielding ground, impatient for the fray. The iron chariots show their ponderous might. Hah ! Hah ! what havoc will the keen edge of flashing scorn and merciless syllogism work among the feeble ranks of the infantry of the cross."

It is a critical time for the soul, when he stands gazing on that imposing array, if he is not assured that the Lord is on his side; if he hears not, as did Joshua, the words: "Be not afraid because of them, to-morrow will I deliver them up all slain before Israel." But for faith in the Divine presence and this sure word the soul is in a sad case, and with quaking heart and tottering knees will quit the high places of the field.

Alas ! alas ! how many in our day are dazed by the hosts of unsanctified science. How many attack with vigour the armies of superstition, but dally, halt, and hesitate in their attacks on false philosophy. Even some who profess to be teachers and leaders in the Church seem to have a strange fear of Jabin and his hosts, and would strongly advise us to come to terms with him at once. Away with such unseemly cowardice, and faithless and fatal laxity ! The Christian soldier is not worthy of his name who is not ready with unfeigned faith in the truth of God to proclaim it boldly, whether men hear or forbear, to oppose all the glitter-

ing phalanxes of false philosophy with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

As we look at this new army mustered to oppose Joshua, we cannot but renew our wonder at the infatuation of the Canaanites. One would have thought that after the astounding miracles of which they have had witness, they would have had no heart to rally again, but give up all opposition. But instead of this every defeat seems to rouse them to greater determination. Though Adoni-zedek is overwhelmed, Jabin has no difficulty in raising an army larger far, beside the waters of Merom.

What a solemn thought it is that the greatest miracles will not in themselves lead the heart of man to subjection. The man entitled "wise" ignores God's wonders. God's wonders rejected by man's wisdom ! That is an old story, whose repetition need cause no surprise. Yea, God's wonders, if they do not soften will certainly harden the heart. This resistance of the Canaanites has to be explained, as was that of Pharaoh, "Their hearts were hardened." This hardening was not God's act, in such wise as to take away their guilt, yet it was God's act in such wise as to become His punishment.

Yet, after all, why should we wonder at these Canaanites, when we have greater cause for wonder in the unbelief of many around us ? What were all the miracles of which these Canaanites were cognisant compared with those with which we have been familiar since our childhood ? Are the facts of the gospel true ? Has the Son of God been made flesh ? has He lived among men ? has He died, the just for the unjust ? has He risen again from the dead ? What, compared with

these facts, was the standing still of the sun and moon ? After the great miracle and mystery of godliness, every other wonder is dwarfed, and sinks into insignificance. Yet alas ! how many who profess to take wisdom for their leader are utterly uninfluenced by them. They cannot know Christ's doctrine, because they will not do Christ's works.

XXVII.

DIVINE DIRECTIONS FOR THE FIGHT.

“And the Lord said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them ; for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel ; thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.”—
JOSH. xi. 6.

THE more we see of Joshua, the more evident does it become that he was a born soldier. Courage was his leading characteristic, and courage of the highest kind : not that homespun article which, however useful, is merely animal ; but that rare, high-souled valour, fed by faith in the living God. And as courage was the master virtue of the man, celerity was the governing principle of the general. Like all the great military leaders which the world has seen, Joshua possessed the capacity of moving armies with amazing rapidity. He inspired the veterans whom he led with a great measure of his own courage and energy. He had his army completely under control, and could hurl it against the enemy from the most unexpected quarters, at the most unlikely times.

In the encounter with Jabin these characteristics of the man and the leader are more fully brought out perhaps than in any other encounter with the Canaanites, because in it there was no miraculous element. The superficial and ordinary historian would ascribe this victory solely to the military genius of

Joshua ; but the devout believer can look above the sword of Israel and the generalship of Joshua to Him who gives all the victory. And from the fact of there being nothing that we call miraculous here, it is all the more vivid a picture of the every-day fight which we have to wage against evil within and without.

The directions which God gave Joshua on this occasion were prefaced by words of encouragement according to the Divine custom. Though Jehovah is not to interpose with mighty power as on former occasions, yet He supports and strengthens His servant with timely encouragement. He did so after Joshua had manifested again his faithfulness to that trust committed to him. It was while Joshua was on his way to meet Jabin, not when he was resting at Gilgal, that God gave him these directions. He was indeed within a few hours' march of the enemy before God spake. Thus again are we taught the important lesson that he who is faithful to the light he has, will always get more, and with it great encouragement. New faithfulness on the part of Joshua brought forth new tokens of favour on the part of God.

Nothing could be better timed than these words as a preparation for the work that had to be done. Joshua has been made fully acquainted with the foe. His scouts have returned covered with dust, and reported the position and numbers and equipment of this new enemy. As these particulars were all told, we can imagine that the boldest held his breath for a time. Joshua's generals would look at each other as if to say, "What shall we do now ?" God knows human nature, therefore at this emergency He steps in with the words, " Be not afraid because of them, for to-

morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel."

God is always well timed in His announcements. When we seek with all our hearts to do His will we shall never lack encouragement, and the greater the enemy, the harder the task, the more emphatic will that encouragement be. When, like the hosts of Jabin, overwhelming difficulties, appalling dangers, fierce temptations, or gigantic sorrows loom vast and terrible before us, and our hearts are like to fail for fear, He knows our frailty, He will come to our succour, He is a very present help in time of trouble.

And the encouragement God gave was very definite. He did not speak in a general way. He fixed the day, the hour, and the extent of the victory. Whatever our difficulties may be, if we only search God's Word we will find definite encouragement, that which exactly meets our circumstances. If we ask Him in all sincerity to show us clearly His will, to grant us some word of truth that will come into our heart and mind and conscience, bearing with it the assurance that it is from Him and for us in our special circumstances, we do not ask too much, we only ask what He is able and willing to bestow. Perhaps we may not get the answer we desire at once; but if this is what we truly desire, and will not be satisfied without, delay on His part will only stimulate us to seek the more diligently; for the blessing is withheld not because God is not ready to give it; but because we are not ready to get it; therefore, "Wait, I say, upon the Lord."

The encouragement was also emphatic. We lose somewhat, in our translation, the emphasis of the original. The I is most emphatic. It is as if God

said to Joshua, "You are looking at Jabin and his hosts, you are counting up his strength, and therefore your heart fails. Look up! I will deliver them up all slain. Are they not all in my hands? Remember Pharaoh and Amalek, Sihon and Og, Jericho and Ai, Beth-Horon and Makkedah. I will deliver them up. I who opened up a path through Jordan, I who cast down the ramparts of Jericho, I who sent the hail from heaven, I who arrested sun and moon in their march, I the Lord God of Sabaoth." The army before Joshua may be as the sand of the sea for multitude, but what are the hosts of Jabin to the hosts of Jehovah? And the man who has on his side Jehovah of hosts can also count on the hosts of Jehovah. Therefore Joshua, even in sight of such a foe, has no cause for fear.

Does not God deal in the very same way with us? With what emphasis does He point to Himself as the glorious Source of light and love and life, so that our hearts may be encouraged to put all their trust in Him, to the casting out of every fear. "I will deliver in every extremity, in every danger, from every foe, I the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who spared Him not, but gave Him up for you all. Can you doubt Me? Can you fear?" "He that spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

And the encouragement was also suggestive. God's words bring to remembrance other scenes and other victories. Joshua was not the only one whom God had helped in similar emergencies. Four hundred years before, father Abram, with his brave little band of trained servants, stood almost on the same spot, while

Chedorlaomer and his confederates encamped where Jabin's hosts now lie. All unconscious of the presence of an enemy, Chedorlaomer pitched his camp in careless security ; and at dead of night, when the sentinels were nodding at their posts, when Lot and the other weary captives forgot for awhile their past fatigues and future woes, Abram fell upon them and utterly destroyed them. Even so shall it be to-morrow. He who gave Abram that great victory will grant to you a greater.

The remembrance of that past victory would make each manly heart in Israel glow with high resolve to emulate the deeds of their fathers. Abram could say, "I came, I saw, I conquered :" why should not Joshua do the same ? Let us argue in like manner. All the difficulties that may come upon us may be new to us, but not one of them is new to God. He has brought His people triumphantly through the same or worse before, and He can do so again.

" Why pour'st thou forth thine anxious plaint,
Despairing of relief,
As if the Lord o'erlooked thy cause,
And did not heed thy grief ?

" Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard,
That firm remains on high
The everlasting throne of Him
Who formed the earth and sky ?

" Art thou afraid His power shall fail
When comes thy evil day ?
And can an all-creating arm
Grow weary or decay ?

" Supreme in wisdom as in power
The Rock of Ages stands ;
Though Him thou canst not see, nor trace
The working of His hands.

“ He gives the conquest to the weak,
Supports the fainting heart ;
And courage in the evil hour
His heavenly aids impart.

“ Mere human power shall fast decay,
And youthful vigour cease ;
But they who wait upon the Lord
In strength shall still increase.

“ They with unwearied feet shall tread
The path of life divine ;
With growing ardour onward move,
With growing brightness shine.

“ On eagles' wings they mount, they soar,
Their wings are faith and love,
Till past the cloudy regions here,
They rise to heaven above.”

This Divine encouragement was coupled with a Divine command. The chief object of Israel's fear would naturally be the horses and chariots which were Jabin's pride and confidence ; and it is to them that the command has special reference. God ordered His servants not to seize them and turn them against the enemy, but to destroy them utterly. “ Thou shalt hough their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” Why should this command be given ? Would it not have been wiser to have retained them and taught the Hebrew soldiers how to use them ? No, most emphatically. Why ? Because the chief thing the people of God have to fear is dependence on anything beneath Jehovah. This command is given for the express purpose of removing a temptation to carnal confidence. Jehovah wishes His people to look to Him alone for victory. This is to be their constant attitude, the holy habit of their souls. Now while this habit of constant trust in the Divine presence and aid is not

intended to do away with the use of means, as this war most emphatically proclaims, still, inasmuch as there are some means which would so operate as necessarily to destroy this simplicity of trust, God has put a veto on their use. Why are they prohibited? Because they are evil in themselves? No! But because if used they would lead God's people to attribute their success to them and not to Him.

He is a jealous God. Such showy equipages as Jabin mustered dazzle the eye and intoxicate the mind with overweening confidence in human power. Israel in its present circumstances cannot use but certainly would abuse them. Not even in the time of the great David, and the glorious Solomon, could they be employed without some measure of failure in this respect ensuing. Therefore the expression of every godly Israelite was this—

“ In chariots some put confidence,
Some horses trust upon :
But we remember will the name
Of our Lord God alone.”

“ The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but victory is of the Lord.”

The bearing of this command on us is plain, and the lesson is much needed in our day. We are to carry on God's work in God's way. There are articles of war laid down for the conducting of the spiritual campaign, from which we are not at liberty to deviate. To do so is to be guilty of insubordination. The Church in these days has much need to remember that those weapons which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, do not commend themselves to natural wisdom. They are not carnal.

Therefore to the carnal mind they are foolishness. There are many of the weapons and devices of the world which ought not to be pressed into the service of the Church. To handle the iron chariots and the prancing horses of human philosophy against the hosts of unbelief, at the same time retaining our confidence in God as the Giver of every victory, and the consciousness that not a single soul can be savingly convinced except by His might,—this is an attainment which the history of the Church from the beginning has proved a practical impossibility. When the King is revealed in all His glory; when Jesus reigns before all, the perfect realization of that which was dimly shadowed forth in David and Solomon,—then the full and glorious harmony between His gospel and right reason will be clearly seen and universally acknowledged. Meanwhile our one work in the prosecution of the campaign of salvation is to preach “Christ and Him crucified,” though fully conscious of the fact that to some it is foolishness, not worth a row of pins; and to others a stumbling-block, utterly repugnant. Jesus, our Leader in this fight, has left us an example we cannot improve upon, and taught us a lesson we may well lay to heart. When He met the great enemy in the wilderness encounter, the only weapon He used was the Word of God. Thus He shows us that in doing His work our appeal must not be to the principles of right reason, exact science, mental or moral philosophy (however convinced we may be that all these, rightly known, are in perfect harmony with the Gospel), but always and for all emergencies to the Word of God. These are the chariots of Jabin, this is the sword of Jehovah. This is God's appointed

weapon in the conflict against all moral and intellectual evil. Yet, almost from the beginning, human philosophy has been an attraction and a snare to the Church, causing it to forsake the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. Chariots and horses make an imposing show, with their tinkling bells and gorgeous caparisons, their glitter and dash, their rattle and dust. No wonder that man's vain eye is fascinated by them; but the eye of faith must look above such things; the faithful soldier must remember that it has pleased God not by the might and wisdom of philosophy, but by the foolishness of preaching, to save. There is, and has always been, a fatal tendency to use the world's weapons in the Church's work; to worship intellect, learning, genius, scholarship, eloquence; to look on these things as the treasury and armoury of the Church; to depend on what is outward and human, instead of what is spiritual; to depend on that which appeals to the eye, the ear, the intellect, the emotions, rather than on the living God and His glorious gospel. They are the mightiest champions who, like the Master, do all the fighting "Not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power."

Thus encouraged and commanded, Joshua brought his army into close proximity to the foe. He rested during that night, and when the grey dawn was lighting up the rushy marshes round the waters of Merom, he burst like a thunderbolt upon Jabin's camp. No opportunity was given for him to bring his horses and chariots to bear upon the Israelites. Instant confusion seems to have overwhelmed the whole of his enormous army. Their very multitude

made them so unwieldy as to prevent the possibility of rallying and making an effective resistance. After a short struggle the army broke into fragments and fled. Part went in a north-westerly direction towards Great Zidon, the then capital of Phoenicia. Part fled westward to Misrephoth-Maim; and a third remnant fled eastward to Mizpeh, at the foot of Hermon.

The victory could not have been more complete; and it was speedily followed up, as in the south, by the subjugation of all the leading cities in the northern portion of Canaan; the city Hasor, Jabin's capital, being destroyed with fire. Thus Joshua fulfilled his commission in the north of the land as well as in the south; and the record of his fidelity is found in these words of Divine commendation:—"As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses. So Joshua took all that land, the hills and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same; even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses" (Josh. xi. 15-20).

As we think on this crowning victory we remember the words, "An horse is a vain thing for safety, neither shall He deliver any by his great strength." Jabin found this out in that dire encounter. Let him clothe his neck with thunder! Let him swallow the ground with his prancing; let him cry among the trumpets, Ha! ha! What is he before the might of Jehovah? Vain for attack, vain for defence, vain for escape. And as Jabin and all his hosts found their imposing panoply a vain mockery, their highest wisdom a gigantic folly, so will it be with all who harden themselves against the gospel of Christ. The more stout in heart they are to resist, the more terrible will be their overthrow.

And if Jabin's overthrow reminds us of these things, this last great victory of Joshua also places very emphatically before us the conditions of success in the work of the Lord. They are few and simple, and easy to be understood. They comprise wise purpose, believing courage, sleepless energy, scrupulous obedience, hard blows. As a young student said to a friend when they were speaking of the work to which they had devoted themselves, "Our great work in preaching to people is not to dish up dainty ideas, but to pound them with the truth." Let us only listen to God's encouragement, obey God's command, march with unfeigned faith, and strike with all our might, and victory is sure.

XXVIII.

THE FIGHT FROM WHICH THEY RESTED.

“The land rested from war.”—JOSH. xi. 23.

“THE land rested from war.” Welcome words!

Welcome to the warriors! Welcome to their leader, welcome to their wives and little ones. Happy day! Each heart would be thrilling with delight as joy-bells with music.

Two things are suggested by these words; first, the fight from which they rested; second, the rest for which they fought. Let us consider the first of these.

Though the records of this war are short, we know that “Joshua made war a long time with all these kings.” Only the most striking and salient features are recorded, and these are such as are well fitted for correction and instruction. First there is the opening of the campaign by the capture of Jericho and Ai. Then the decisive battle of Beth-Horon, by which all southern Canaan lay at Joshua’s feet. Then comes the crowning victory of Merom, whereby the north was subdued. The details of the subjugation, both north and south, are given very briefly, but the parts of supreme interest and importance are fully recorded. The campaign in all probability lasted for six years. From the words of Caleb (Joshua xiv. 7-10) we know that from the time that the Israelites encamped at

Kadesh-Barnea till the end of this war was forty-five years. But from the time of this encampment at Kadesh-Barnea till the entrance into the land was thirty-nine years. Therefore from the time of entering into the land till the end of the war must have been about six years. Thus it was a conflict prolonged through a week of years, and in the seventh year came the Sabbath of rest. In this respect this fight also resembles the long war which we have to wage against the world, the devil, and the flesh. It lasts through all the work-day years of our life; that is to say, all the days of our earthly pilgrimage. There is no peace for us till we reach the Sabbath of eternal rest.

We have already seen that war was judicial and penal so far as the Canaanites were concerned, therefore there is no further cause to draw attention to this aspect of the fight; but it will be well to notice its educational influence upon the Israelites. In attempting to drive out the Canaanites there might have occurred, either a vast triumph, finishing the campaign at one blow; or an overwhelming trial, filling the hearts of the Israelites with despair. We can easily comprehend the evils that would result from the latter, but it is not so readily seen that the former would have been far from an unmixed good. God, had He so chosen, could have brought all the Canaanites together and crushed them at one blow. He did not do so, and He gives us the reason why He did not. So far as His people were concerned it was for their spiritual training. Had He wrought such a wonder, they might have magnificently celebrated His praises as at the Red Sea, but as easily forgotten His mercies as at

Marah. Jehovah sought to teach them and us, by the continuance of this conflict, that His heritage is our portion only through faith in Him and faithfulness to His word. The ignominious disaster at Ai made this most emphatic, as it convinced Israel that without these they were weak as water. In the prosecution of this war, faith and obedience must be cultivated at every step.

The same principles hold good now, for they are founded in the nature of things, and in the character of God. By all the experiences through which we pass in life, God would teach us to put all our trust in Him and to obey Him perfectly. If the discipline of our lives teaches us faith and faithfulness we will never regret it, however severe. Perhaps we are sometimes inclined to ask, If our God and Father is the Almighty One, why does He not give us immediate and perfect victory over all evil? Why does He not give perfect relief from care and grief and anxiety, and temptation and sin? Why does He not with one sweeping victory exterminate all evil that comes from within, all care that comes from without? It is because He would teach us day by day the lessons of faith and obedience. It is because He would prepare us for all the glory He has in store for us. This present discipline, however hard, is essential to our future and more full attainments in holiness and happiness. It is folly to expect instant and perfect victory over all the field. By battle after battle is the inheritance won. By little and little are our enemies dispossessed. To imagine otherwise is to indulge a delusion, to ignore facts, to put an end to progress, and to court disaster. Such absolute victory, by one

solemn act of consecration, by one great *coup de foi*, is unknown in the counsel of God, and is inconsistent with the purpose for which He has left us here.

Yet there is an opposite error that must be guarded against. If we are not to expect one great and decisive victory, much less are we to expect a series of disastrous defeats. If too great a triumph might have led to presumption on the part of Israel, too great a trial might have induced despair. Accordingly, God neither gave the one nor did He permit the other, but always tempered both to the necessities of His people. The onsets made on Israel might, many of them, have been too formidable, had not God gradually trained them to confidence in battle. Recall the progress of this campaign, and you will see how gradually God leads on His people to greater achievements. At the beginning God's miracles were astounding and Israel's victories very easy. But as the war proceeds the difficulties increase, and at the same time the arm of the Lord is less and less distinctly revealed, till indeed towards the end of the campaign it seems as if all was left to human wisdom, valour, and might. Jericho was more easily taken than Ai. The people of Ai were more easily defeated than the army of Adoni-zedek. The confederacy of the south was not so numerous, imposing, and powerful as that of the north. And the last enemies whose destruction is recorded are the gigantic Anakim.

Is not this a true picture of spiritual experience, full of instruction and encouragement? How often does the young convert feel himself walking in a land of miracle? "Old things have passed away, all things have become new." Evil habits, however strong, seem

paralysed. The chains of iron and the fetters of steel fall from his limbs. The bars of brass are broken, and he quits the prison-house of Satan and walks abroad in abounding liberty and glorious triumph. Sometimes, indeed, in the buoyancy of his soul, he indulges in strange talk, shakes his head with precocious wisdom, and assumes unconscious airs of superiority in the presence of such as do not share his happy experience. But by-and-bye he encounters some gross and humiliating defeat like that which befel Israel at Ai. He is humbled in the dust. With chastened spirit he begins to join trembling with his mirth, and he finds out, more and more every day, the need of constant trust and unquestioning obedience. The fight of faith he finds is no sham battle, no holiday manœuvre or pleasing parade, but a hard matter-of-fact struggle day after day, week after week, year after year, as long as there is breath in the body. He wakes up to the fact that in this fight of faith, as in that, the conditions of success are trustful courage, wise purpose, sleepless energy, scrupulous obedience, and hard blows.

God treated His people as a mother does her child. He held them by the hand, supporting them by such astounding miracles that at first they seemed to walk by sight; but gradually, as they could bear it, that hand was removed, till in the end they walked by faith. He instructed them like a wise teacher. He led them slowly step by step at the initial stages; never setting them a task which they were unable to master, yet never giving them one too easy; hence there was no hurry and no bewilderment, but gradual and healthy development. Or again we might say, in His dealings with His people, God always pro-

portions the load we bear to our strength ; and therefore the strength is steadily increased and greater burdens are borne. Of one thing we may rest assured, He will never allow us to break down. Sometimes we may feel overburdened. He can grant us deliverance in two ways ; either by lightening the burden or by strengthening the shoulder. Either way His grace is sufficient for us ; but the latter way is the more blessed and the more profitable. For if God removes the burden, we remain weak as we were. But if He does not remove it we receive out of His fulness more spiritual stamina and manhood, and therefore are made fit for something higher and nobler.

It will be interesting to notice the last foes encountered in this fight. We read in the immediately preceding verses :—" At that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel : Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities. There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel : only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained. So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses ; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war " (Josh. xi. 21-23). God thus reserved the Anakim to the very end of the war. They had probably retired to their mountain fastnesses in Judah, and therefore were for a long time unmolested, as we know part of the Jebusites were, who retained their impregnable fortress till the days of David. These Anakim were the first to fill the hearts of the

Israelites with fear, and they were the last to be faced. Compared with them the Israelites felt themselves grasshoppers, and it was well that their giant strength was not braved at the beginning of the campaign, but reserved to its close. Israel did not face these giants till it had been trained in the war of the Lord ; till it knew how invincible was the man who put his trust in Jehovah ; till it knew from its own experience how one could chase a thousand,—till in short it was able to measure the strength of the Anakim not against their own, but against the omnipotence of Jehovah. Then were they ready for the attack ; then did they feel these giants, dwarfs before Jehovah ; then did they disdain their mountain passes, their towering fortresses, their frowning battlements, their gigantic height, their swaggering bearing, their mighty boasts, their thundering blows. The opposition which was once deemed invincible, now shrinks into insignificance.

How often is it thus in the experience of God's people. I have sometimes asked young converts why they had been so long in coming forward to confess Christ. And their reply has often been, "I saw what was required and expected of a Christian. I felt the many and great difficulties that lay in the way of confessing Christ. I knew something of the temptations and troubles that would come upon me if I became a Christian, and as I looked at these things I felt afraid, and shrank back conscious of my own weakness." Exactly ! Before these difficulties, that would come upon you by confessing Christ, you feel as grasshoppers. Does that express your present position ? You are like Israel at Kadesh-Barnea. You are standing on the very borders of

the land, with all its beauty spread before you. Yea, you also are spying it out. You are considering the promises and the blessings of Christ for time and eternity. You cannot but confess that it is a goodly heritage, a pleasant land flowing with milk and honey. Yea, you may be enjoying at this very moment, some of the fruits of that land, some luscious clusters grown within its borders and laid in your lap. The grapes of Eshcol are beautiful to your eyes and sweet to your taste. You are sincerely thankful for some at least of the blessings of Christianity. You do give hearty thanks for that great blessing of your British birthright, for that greater blessing of a pious home, for that greatest blessing of a godly and gracious training. And you know in your inmost soul that it is Christ and His truth that have given these all their sweetness, and all their power to bless. Even though you have not entered the good land, you know that you are refreshed by its blessed fruits.

Then why not enter in? It is free for you. No walls rise up between you and it to shut you out. No deep river rolls to prevent your entrance. Ah! you are afraid. There are giants there, and strong cities walled to the sky. If I confess Christ I shall have mighty temptations and troubles to face and overcome. Yes, they stalk through the land, and they loom up greater than they are, because of your disordered imagination. And though you look with wistful eyes towards that goodly heritage, the thought of what you must encounter makes your heart melt for fear, and you shrink back like a coward into the dreary wilderness of condemnation, rather than march forward into the glorious land of promise.

Are such your difficulties? Well, I do not say you are strong. I do not say that there are no Anakim in the land. But I do say that you utterly misunderstand the meaning of the situation. The instant you go forward, you enlist on your side the strength of Jehovah, and there is no sin, no temptation, no trouble, however gigantic, over which He cannot cause you to triumph. He who shrinks back from the profession of Christ on such a plea is guilty of the sin of Israel when they refused to march into the land. Remember, therefore, the exhortation of Caleb and Joshua, "The Lord is with us, fear thou not." Also, be it known to you that this trouble does not arise from your thinking *too little* of your own strength, but from the very opposite cause. You do think that you have *a little* strength; you do not think that you have *none*. You think that in your weakness you are like a grasshopper. No, you are as the grass itself, and all your glory as the flower of the grass, to be trodden under foot with the utmost ease. You have not yet come to an end of yourself. You do not yet know that you are altogether "without strength." Still you are under the leadership of Moses, and looking to the law for entrance. Continuing thus, you must go back into the wilderness, you must see the death of Moses, you must put yourself under the leadership of Jesus, and as those who have no might, who are dead and buried with Him, pass into the land.

To maintain a consistent and true profession of Christianity in our own strength is an impossibility. To imagine that we are called upon to do so, is to show that we are ignorant of the first rudiments of the grace of God, that we are still under Moses, that

we are still looking to Sinai, still trusting in the law, still depending on our own strength. The men that confessed themselves grasshoppers had still the presumption to go and fight the Canaanites unsent of God. So he who faces evil in the strength of the flesh goes a warfare at his own charges, marches to defeat and destruction.

But there are lessons here for the Christian veteran as well as for the Christian recruit. He has left Moses behind, as a leader who can give no rest, he has put himself under the flag of Joshua, he has entered into the inheritance and fought the good fight of faith, with encouraging measure of success. Yet still there remain some temptations, some sins, some sorrows, some bereavements, which look very dreadful. They are like gigantic Anakim, before which you quail. Do not measure your might with theirs. Pit them against the omnipotence of your Father God. Cannot a little child trust in the might of his father's arm, the love of his father's heart, and the resources of his father's knowledge in the face of every danger? Do you tremble at the prospect of some dread encounter? Do you deem this sorrow or that sin, this temptation or that trouble, this weakness or that habit, invincible? Do you mourn over repeated failure and bewail your sad case? Such sorrow is meet, but do not turn your back or indulge despair. Their bulk and strength will prove nothing if you tackle them as David did Goliath, in the "Strength of the Lord." Listen to Paul: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Any temptation, any sin, any trial, is too much for us in our own strength; but strengthened with His might, the meanest can face and overcome the greatest of them all.

Still another point has to be noted. The fighting does not grow less severe as we go onwards. The Anakim were left to the last. So often the greatest burdens, the sharpest trials, the severest afflictions, the fiercest temptations, come at the end. David was not a young man when he was tempted and fell. He was old and grey-headed when, with bare feet and broken heart, he fled from Jerusalem. It was when Solomon was old that "His wives turned away his head after other gods." Moses was an aged man when he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Surely, then, no man can ever rest here in fancied security. "Let not him that putteth on his harness boast as him that putteth it off." There is no place and no time on earth for boasting.

"Now we fight the battle,
But then shall wear the crown
Of full and everlasting
And passionless renown."

Yes, and granted that all spiritual enemies are subdued, that every fortress is razed, every foe exterminated; still, before every one of us, if the Lord tarry, towers the last great enemy, that tremendous son of Anak, Death. He perhaps was the first whose grizzly might filled our hearts with fear, and he will be the very last to fall; but fall he also must, and therefore over him, in anticipation of that final overthrow, God's people can shout, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore let us remember that the path of the just, as here set forth for our instruction, shines more and more, through sterner conflicts, nobler victories, and deeper experiences, till it bursts into the glory of the perfect day.

XXIX.

THE REST FOR WHICH THEY FOUGHT.

“The land rested from war.”—JOSH. xi. 23.

THE rest for which Israel fought had been promised more than four hundred years before. When Abraham dwelt in Mesopotamia the God of glory appeared to him and spoke to him concerning it (Gen. xii. 1-3). When he left his fatherland and came into Canaan the promise was renewed (Gen. xii. 6, 7). Also, after Lot separated from him and pitched his tent towards Sodom, it was repeated with greater definiteness. And still further, after the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, it was reaffirmed with the most impressive accompaniments. This promise, so old, so solemn, so wide, so definite, so clear, and so often repeated, was the formative and governing principle in the lives of all the patriarchs. This it was that made them Faith's Pilgrim Fathers. They believed these promises, their hearts embraced them, and they confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers in the earth. They might have returned to their own land, but the power of this promise kept them homeless wanderers all their lives, sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange country.

But the promise was sure, though held long in

abeyance for wise and loving purposes. The vision may tarry, but come it must ; because God's gifts and calling are without repentance, unconditioned by aught in the creature ; and because God's power and wisdom are without limit. He is the God of truth and of infinite resources. Through strange scenes, hard discipline, and varying experiences the seed of Abraham may pass, but all the time God is leading them to His promised rest. Abraham may die without a rood of ground beyond his grave. Isaac may fall asleep with the promise, to all appearance, no nearer fulfilment. To Jacob the outlook may be blacker still, yet God has never forgotten His promise. If Jacob's sons plot against Joseph and sell him a slave into the cruel hands of strangers, it is God sending a man before them to preserve all, and to lay the foundations of a holy nation. If Joseph dies in a strange land, still he can make mention of the departure of Israel and give commandment concerning his bones. If another Pharaoh rises who knows not Joseph, it is to fuse the seed of Abraham in that furnace of affliction, and by common sorrows make them seek for common consolation through His promise. If the furnace is heated sevenfold and no man-child must live, it is that the waters of the Nile may bear on their bosom the goodly babe Moses, and deposit him safely on the footsteps of Pharaoh's throne, thus to be fitted for his life work and the fulfilment of Jehovah's promise. Come to man's estate, he leads the redeemed nation out of bondage, brings them the law from Sinai, builds the tabernacle, guides them to the borders of the land, and passes away on the mount of vision. His attendant Joshua carries them across Jordan, leads

them through the long and glorious campaign, and at last brings them to the long-looked-for goal, "The land rested from war." Not a word had failed of all that God had promised.

What a lesson in patience have we here. What encouragement to wait for the end of the Lord. What must have been the feelings of these children of Abraham, recalling that ancient promise, and entering into the possession of cities they had not built, of vineyards, olive groves, orchards, and fields they had not cultivated.

" It was a fearful joy, I ween,
To trace the heathen's toil :
The limpid wells, the orchards green,
Left ready for the spoil,
The household stores untouched, the roses bright,
Wreathed o'er the cottage walls in garlands of delight."

Surely, as we consider them thus at the end of their toils and in the enjoyment of that great promise, we may exclaim, "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord."

Is there anything as good in store for us? There is better. God's basket of bounty is not empty. His treasury of grace is not drained out. We, as much as Israel in its darkest days, have need of the rest of God. How often, imprisoned in worse than Egyptian bondage, did we sigh, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I flee away and be at rest." Does the troubled soul ask, Is there rest for me? A promise of respite and nepenthe? Yes! Yes! and it is a promise even more venerable than that we have been considering, and wide as whosoever wills to trust it.

God's act gave this promise first of all. After He created all things He rested from His works. He had gone out of Himself to work; He returned to Himself to rest. This Sabbath of the Eternal therefore was a declaration that all was finished, that creation was perfect, that everything He looked upon corresponded to the Divine ideal. Accordingly it declared the Divine sovereignty, might, wisdom, and love. And more; inasmuch as to God all the future as well as all the past lies bare, this rest is a proof that whatever the distracting processes through which in the slow evolution of ages the world shall pass, the end to which it hastens must be rest; rest for the creature, rest for the Creator; rest for the creature because first of all rest for the Creator. Nothing can prevent the carrying out of the Divine, the original ideal.

As certainly as the old creation, through ages of convulsion and astounding changes, attained its crown and climax in God's rest; so surely the new creation, by whatever mysteries and conflicts its development is characterized, shall usher in the glorious Sabbath of Redemption. Oh the rest of God! the sweet beneficent Sabbath of eternal love! Its past enjoyment over creation is the promise of its future attainment over redemption. Thus, engraven on the old creation, we have a heavenly hieroglyph, which is the promise and pledge of the glorious rest of the New Heaven and the New Earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

God's word also gives the same promise. Our hearts are dull, therefore He gives us line upon line, precept upon precept, promise upon promise. Through

His own Son He has proclaimed the rest we need ; for as Jesus stood in this weary world He cried, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As surely as Joshua gave rest to those who followed him, so surely does Jesus give rest to all who put their trust in Him. And this gracious promise is as old as the first sin that caused the unrest. It has been more solemnly ratified than any other. By the oath of God, by the blood of Jesus, it is made sure. And it is wide as the world of the weary ; whosoever will may appropriate it. It is also very clear and very definite. There is no ambiguity about it, there need be no doubt as to its meaning. And how influential has it been in the past, how potent is it at present. The innumerable company of the redeemed have found in this promise a power sufficient to govern all their lives ; a solace for every woe. No power of any kind in the history of the human race has ever been so pervasive as that of this sure promise.

But if the rest for which Israel fought was a rest long promised, it was also a rest which for a time was forfeited. All those to whom the promise was given did not enter in. It was forfeited by a whole generation. If the children enjoyed that rest their fathers fell in the wilderness. Every camping ground was a burying-place. There must have been an average of one hundred funerals per day for thirty-eight years. There was not only God's promise, but also God's breach of promise. There was not only God's oath in grace, "To thee and to thy seed," but also God's oath in anger, "If they shall enter in." Why this breach of the Divine promise ? Why this oath in anger ?

Why this forfeited rest? Was it because they murmured against God? because they provoked and tempted Him? Yes, we might answer, and still not go to the root of the matter. We must find the fundamental reason in their unbelief—"They could not enter in because of unbelief." As certainly as the promise was to all, so certainly was it forfeited by all who believed not. Therefore with chastened joy they must have entered into the possession of the inheritance. If the promise filled their hearts with joy, its forfeiture would make them fear. Such chastened joy and holy fear are not incompatible; rather are they inseparable. Whenever we embrace the promise by faith, we have a reverential fear of the Promiser, and a distrust of ourselves lest we should be unworthy of His grace. That experience can never be right of which fear is not a constituent part.

To us there is a promise of rest as there was to them; but this rest may be forfeited also by us as was theirs; yea, it will be forfeited by all that believe not. What, then, should we do? The answer is already given, "They could not enter in because of unbelief. Thou standest by faith. Therefore be not high-minded, but fear." Let us fear with that fear which has strong confidence, with which we work out our salvation, which mingles with holy mirth, which lasts through all the time of our sojourn here, and which is our safety. "Blessed is the man that feareth alway."

Further, the rest for which Israel fought was imperfect. It was only a comparative rest. The land as a whole was taken. It was so far in their hands that they could with safety partition it among the

several tribes, allowing each to perfect the work of conquest within his allotted territory. The Canaanites were unable to put an army in the field. Their united power was for the time utterly broken. Yet still they had cities here and there in their possession. Indeed, it could be said with truth to Israel, "There remaineth very much land to be possessed." This was according to the Divine purpose. The Canaanites were to be driven out "little by little." They were to remain for a time, to prevent the land from lapsing into an irreclaimable waste, to exercise the people in war, and to be a test of Israel's faithfulness.

A superficial observer, looking at the fair outward aspect and forgetting the mountain fastnesses and unsubdued strongholds, might have concluded that all was conquered. But Joshua knew better. He knew the need of constant watchfulness and incessant effort. The enemy was scotched, not killed, and a lapse into false security would be fatal.

We have therefore here a master-sketch of Christian experience. The believer enters into life by a miracle of grace and power. He is buried with Christ by baptism into His death. He is raised with Him and seated with Him in heavenly places. He finds his Gilgal at Golgotha, where the reproach of sin is rolled away, and he receives nourishment for his soul. Here, also, he learns the mystery of the Divine Leadership of Him who has said, "Lo, I am with you always." He takes Him as Prophet, Priest, and King. Then he learns the might of faith in casting down the walls which human pride and strength and skill have reared. He is also taught, it may be by humiliating defeat, the weakness of unbelief and disobedience, as was Israel

at Ai. He is convinced that if he is not to make shipwreck he must hold fast "Faith and a good conscience." Then with bitter sorrow he learns the value of self-judgment and confession of sin. The dark and dreadful valley of Achor becomes the only door of hope. Then with deeper intelligence he repeats with restored soul the Amen of allegiance, deliberately takes the law of God for his guide, and depends on the cross for power of communion. He camps at Ebal and Gerizim, in the very centre of the blessed inheritance, surrounded by its fairest scenes, when his heart knows the meaning of these words, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Then, from new consecration, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh, he passes on to higher acts of faith and to nobler victories. Things in heaven as well as things on earth reveal faith's power. He can put his foot on the necks of tyrant sins, and laugh to scorn the horses and chariots of human might. Sometimes there are periods of desperate fighting, in which every fibre is strained to its utmost tension. Sometimes there are periods of comparative repose, a welcome lull, when the land rests from war. And in these happy days all the work may seem done, and perfect victory gained. Old and tough sins are conquered. Those that remain hide their diminished heads. No longer dare they stalk bold and barefaced through the land without a challenge ; and the superficial observer might think that all is peace and perfection. As Joshua would have smiled at such a supposition, so does the mature Christian. They are not all rooted out. Still they lurk in

the dark recesses of the heart, ready to spring out and pounce upon us if for a moment we are off our guard. Therefore there is constant need of watchfulness. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Lastly, the rest for which Israel fought was prospective. From the very fact of its imperfections it pointed forward to a better. Had this rest been utterly unsatisfying, visionary, and unreal, God's promise would have been discredited. Had it been in every respect satisfactory, God's people would have rested at a lower level than He desired. Hence the argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews, founded on the "to-day" of David. Long after the time of which we speak David said, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Now if Joshua had given them rest; if the rest which is spoken of here had been perfect, there would have been no need for thus speaking. Therefore it follows that there must be a better rest and a higher which we should still seek to attain—"There remaineth therefore a rest," a glorious and eternal Sabbath, "for the people of God."

Therefore let us praise the grace of Him who has given us such a sure and wide promise. Let us fear continually lest by our unbelief we forfeit it. Let us watch, because it can never be perfect here. Let us labour to enter in, for in its highest and most blessed sense it still lies before us all. To-day if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts. Yesterday is irrevocable. To-morrow is irreclaimable. To-day is ours. Come then unto Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and who stands stretching out His hands

all the day long and saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

XXX.

THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD.

“Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings ; Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, and gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel His people.”
—PSALM CXXXV. 10-12.

THE first division of the Book of Joshua ends with the twelfth chapter. This chapter constitutes the capital of that column erected by the Holy Ghost to celebrate the fulfilment of the promises and purposes of God. And we see inscribed upon it these words, “Behold the goodness and severity of God”—His goodness towards the Israelites ; His severity towards the Canaanites.

The chapter is a short summary of the work that has been done. In this *résumé* of the conquest Moses is not forgotten. He is named as well as Joshua. It is fitting that these two names should be linked together, for though that of Joshua is the more prominent in this work, still his work could not have been begun without that of Moses. The success of the present leader is not allowed to overshadow the faithful work of the past. The Holy Ghost delights to point out how God causes many instruments to work out His designs, and thus takes all praise from man.

Thus the chapter is a miniature, suggesting all the victories that Israel won, and all the defeats which

overwhelmed the Canaanites. Accordingly it is valuable as a demonstration that both the promises and the threatenings of God will be fulfilled to the letter. It stands on the Divine record, a declaration to all generations, that God will keep His word, whether it is gracious or terrible. Therefore they are safe who trust in His promises. They will be undone who despise His threatenings.

Have we no need of such instruction? It may be granted that the lesson is very plain, and very fundamental, but have all learned it? Alas, no! Men are very loath to believe that blessing is only to be found in following God, and that elsewhere destruction is sure. Hence, however plainly God has taught this truth, men in their folly are slow to learn it. Here as in a glass we see on the one hand the course and the end of those who follow God, and on the other the course and the end of those who resist. Or, we have pointed out to us the narrow way that leads to life, and the broad road that leads to destruction. May we ponder these things and learn the way wherein we should walk.

NOTICE FIRST THE DIFFERENT ROADS. That of Israel was the path of obedience. Everything was done by Divine command. If the history of this conquest has been understood at all, it must be plain that this is the leading characteristic of the people. They are different from their fathers, and much superior. Where God commands them they go. What He says to them they do. They march and they halt at the Divine word. This explains all their successes. Any reverse that they experienced can clearly be traced to disobedience.

But it was not always easy work for Israel to obey. The commands of God not only led along a narrow way, but often brought them up to a strait gate. Often, indeed, the gate was so strait that they could not squeeze their own ideas through it. It was so at the crossing of Jordan, at the circumcision of Gilgal, at the fall of Jericho, at the march to Shechem, and at the fight with Adoni-zedek and Jabin. Had they at any of these points in the conquest begun to reason why, they would have been undone. They had just to go right on, according to the command of God. Obedience was their watchward. To stop and parley was to be lost. Patient endurance characterised them all through. Without spiritual staying power the work would not have been accomplished. Patient endurance is the great need of the soldier, of the athlete, and of the artist. This gains the victory and wins the prize. When an old general was asked why he picked out the old veterans for a forced march, he replied, "Because they have the most staying power." For hard work of any kind this is what tells in the long run; and from the first encounter with Sihon and Og to the last wrestle with the Anakim Israel exhibited this quality both in things physical and in things spiritual. Obedience was the path; patient endurance was the characteristic of those who walked therein.

On the part of the Canaanites their course was marked by rebellion. No doubt they had called it by other and nobler names. They had spoken of it as patriotism, self-defence, liberty, manliness; but such epithets fail to give the truth, because they ignore the fact that the mind and will of God were clearly declared and understood. From first to last on the part of the

Canaanites this was a struggle against the living God. Morally and spiritually they hated His will, therefore outwardly and physically they opposed His purposes. They walked in their own way, according to their own will. They said, "Who is Lord over us?" Thus they hardened themselves against God's will, and fought it out to the bitter end, learning no lesson and yielding no submission.

These two paths of obedience and rebellion have not ceased to be trodden. Neither of them is grass-grown. Thank God there are many who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality. Sometimes the road is hard and steep and narrow, but they would not relinquish it, for that would only be a change to a road which is far worse. For though the other road is broad and lies downhill, it is not easy to walk therein. If it is hard sometimes to obey the will of God, it will be harder far to resist it. If there must be patient continuance on the part of those who walk the narrow way, there must be constant contention on the part of those who hurry down the broad road. There must be the resistance of the Holy Ghost, of the warnings of conscience, of the light of truth. There must be at times the fear of death and judgment and eternity. Surely these things make the road far from easy. Do you think it hard to be a Christian? Have you found it easy to be a sinner? Have you found it pleasant work to kick against the pricks? Do you think it hard to get to heaven? Is it not hard to get to hell? I have heard a pugilist, pointing to his battered face and blind eye, say, "The devil was a hard master to me." Did you ever hear of anyone saying so of Jesus?

Ay, even when obedience to Him made them give their bodies to be burned? I could easily imagine the soldiers of Adoni-zedek and Jabin speaking like that pugilist. I could not imagine one man in Joshua's army saying so. Therefore, friend, if you are on the narrow road press on; if you are on the broad road quit it.

OBSERVE FURTHER THE DIFFERENT OBJECTS placed before each. That placed before Israel was something very definite and tangible, viz., the sure promise of Jehovah. To them that promise was the title-deed of the Holy Land; therefore all through this war they had in their eye a Divine inheritance, and all the glory and honour which this implied. The thought of God's promise and the sight of this inheritance would stimulate every soldier and make the feeblest a hero. Obedience was made easier by the object in view. They fought for that inheritance as men who felt their need of it. They had left Egypt; they could find no resting-place in the desert; therefore they would be homeless wanderers without it. They fought with all the more ardour when they saw its excellence. Every march they made displayed new beauties. The Divine description of it was not overdrawn. They fought intelligently, knowing the conditions of obtaining it, that is to say, loyal-hearted trust and obedience, and they were willing to make any sacrifice so as to obtain it. Thus God's promise thrilled their hearts like martial music, and led them with buoyant steps through all the toilsome way.

Can we find any similar incitement on the part of the Canaanites? Nay. Theirs was a hopeless struggle. They were without God and therefore without hope.

They obeyed unrighteousness, and were therefore filled with unrest. Neither their kings nor their gods could give good hope. All the future was dark and dismal. They had nothing wherewith to be comforted. They were disheartened and distrustful. Their hearts melted within them. They were weak as water. Notwithstanding all their outward swagger, they were half-beaten before they began the fight. Notwithstanding their widespread leagues, their imposing array, their terrible armour, their renowned leaders, they had no certainty, and therefore no elasticity of spirit.

So is it now. They who walk in the obedience of faith have a glorious object before their eyes to stimulate and encourage them. They seek for glory and honour and immortality. This is the inheritance on which their hearts are fixed. And they have good hope through grace of obtaining it. Yea, they have God's faithful promise, and therefore glorious assurance of the result. They can sing—

“More happy but not more secure
The glorified spirits in heaven.”

This hope of theirs is exercised through conflict as was Israel's, but the more it is exercised the stronger and brighter it grows. They go from strength to strength. Their path is that of the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

But where is the hope of the rebellious? It is but a vague, unsatisfying dream. At the very best they have no certainty of a happy issue. When they pass hence it is “A leap in the dark.” What a miserable plight is this! Notwithstanding their vast coalitions, their imposing armies, their formidable weapons, their

notable leaders, they go forward with fear. The Sihon and Og of materialism, the Adoni-zedek of sacerdotalism, the Jabin of false philosophy, can inspire no true and blessed hope in the hearts of their faltering followers.

THINK ALSO OF THE DIFFERENT ENDS. We see the Israelites marching on from victory to victory ; entering into Canaan, enjoying the smile of God, and reaping the fruit of their labours. We see the Canaanites swept with a besom of destruction, and all that is left of their mightiest kings is the chronicle of their tombstones as given here. The ends are different because the beginnings are different. Of Israel it might be said, "These all fought in faith." Of the Canaanites it might be said, "These all died in unbelief." This is the epitaph written by the Divine finger on every tombstone ; an epitaph that does not lie.

Paul has laid plainly before us in the Epistle to the Romans these two ends, as we must know them. On the one hand he places eternal life, glory, honour, peace. On the other he places indignation, wrath, tribulation, anguish. One or other of these is the terminus to which every life is hastening. And He also plainly tells us that without faith it is impossible to walk in the good way or to attain the glorious end. Remember then God's solemn record of the dead. He marks His own as precious jewels, to be worn in His crown in the day of glory, but He counts His enemies but worthless ashes to be trodden under foot. In the Divine record of the dead there are no omissions, no oversights, and no lies. He counts His enemies and He counts His friends. How will He count you ?

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

MOSES is dead.—Sad words and solemn these,
So orphaned Israel thought as low she sat
Upon the plains of Moab, and forgot
In that great grief her highest destinies.
Never, till Shiloh come, shall mortal eye
Behold a greater 'mong the sons of men.
Yea, in the circle of this fallen race
Where can we find his peer? Like lofty peaks
In Alpine regions rise the Friend of God,
Bethlehem's Singer sweet, the Well-beloved,
The Gentiles' Doctor grand—and each in turn
May seem the highest as we change the view;
But, take him all in all, Amram's fair son,
So strangely trained, so sorely tried; so wise,
So meek, so chivalrous; so clothed with might
Of heart and head and holy hand, stands out
Most glorious of the sons of men, to lift
Our eyes still upward to that Prophet great,
The Son of God, whom all mankind must hear.
And he is dead!—but death to him was grand
Above what words can speak or thoughts conceive.
Peerless he was in life, peerless in death.
Since earth became a universal grave
No euthanasia, for which have sighed
The sages sad in impotent despair,
Is earned by mighty deeds or mighty words.
“From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
And Swift expires a driveller and a show.”
And so have died earth's noblest, but not thus
Did mighty Moses bid farewell to time.

No fell disease, with cruel ravages,
 Ran riot in his frame ; nor did the tooth
 Of time relentless gnaw the core of strength
 And make a ruin, vast and pitiful.
 Firm was his foot upon the rugged slope
 Of Abarim. With eagle eye undimmed
 He scanned the distant scene from Nebo's brow.
 No grey hairs waving 'mong his raven locks,
 No weary wrinkles on his lofty brow,
 No ashy paleness on his cheek, bespoke
 The advent of those dark and evil days,
 When life is leaden with monotony
 Of cares and fears, and aches and peevish moans.
 His strength was unabated and his mind
 Unclouded ere it fled its earthly home.
 Witness that glorious book * which Jesus quotes,
 The great law-giver's legacy of love,
 His commentary on the law divine ;
 The Magna Charta of the prophets true ;
 The arsenal for every holy war
 That faithful hearts have waged against the false
 And cruel outbursts of the sinful heart ;
 The swan song of the poet and the seer
 Who pierced the mists of time, to hail the dawn
 Of that great day when Israel, blessed of God,
 Should dwell secure beneath a Father's eye—
 All sin forgiven and all sorrow past,
 All wanderings ended and all curse removed,
 The law of God deep graven on their hearts.

Nor did he pass away with vain regrets
 And unavailing tears, like victim dragged
 Unwilling to his doom, although his end
 Recalls the greatest sorrow that e'er wrung
 His soul, his agonizing earnestness,
 His plea pathetic, " Lord, Thou hast begun
 To show me all Thy greatness. Let me go,
 I pray Thee, o'er the river, and behold
 The Land beyond and goodly Lebanon."
 But that sore struggle and its woe are past,

* Deuteronomy

With meek submission he resigns his will,
And crushed by no dismay, he turns his back
On all that earth contains, as once before
He counted Christ's reproach his greatest gain.
Behold him ! He has bid a last farewell
To all the elders of the holy host.
The eyes of weeping thousands rest on him
As his majestic presence slow ascends :
The mothers hold their little ones aloft
To print for ever on their memories
The sacred likeness of that man of God.
A solemn hush is resting o'er the tents,
Men speak in softest whispers, and each ear
Seems strained to catch the rustle of the wings
Of mighty angels, sweeping down to bear
Him hence. See, see, he stands upon the brow
Between them and the pure high Heaven above,
As oft before, God's mediator true.
And, lo, his hands are raised, he sends them back
His last good-bye, a benediction mute
Which falls upon the camp like Heavenly dew,
And melts all hearts beneath Jehovah's hand !
They wipe their eyes from blinding tears. Again
They gaze, they see his form no more. Alone,
Alone, alone, he passes unto God.
Yet ere he leaves the scene of all his toil
A glorious vision of the goodly land
Fills his rapt eye and floods his soul with peace.
From troubled Jordan rolling full in flood,
The City of the Palm Trees nestling near
To where the Great Sea kissed its sacred shore,
One rich and varied garden, freshly decked
In all the beauty of the sunny spring,
Lay smiling at his feet. Its verdant vales,
Its vine-clad hills and glistening olive groves,
Its flowery meads, its fertile fields enriched
With golden promise, and its mountain slopes
Sprinkled with fleecy flocks, all seem prepared
To give an eager welcome to God's host.
The very breezes murmur their delight

And by them stirred to rapture, every branch
In every forest clasps its leafy hands.

From milky Bashan, with its belt of green,
To honeyed Carmel and its thymy slopes ;
From burning sands where dim mirages rest,
To cool, clear snowy peaks of Lebanon,
His eye enraptured flits ; and hark, a voice
Proclaims, " This is the land—the land I sware
To give for ever unto Abraham's seed ! "

Another fond adoring look he takes
Of that fair heritage. His eye entranced
Dwells on yon snowy peak of Lebanon,
Rising above the calm blue sea beyond.
And, lo, as keen he gazes it dissolves
Into a glory far above his thoughts,
That snow-capped height is now a great white throne,
That calm blue sea, the glorious sea of glass,
That rolling flood and smiling land of rest,
The stream of life eternal, and oh, sight
Of joy supreme, the Paradise of God !

So Moses died. With kiss of love most sweet
Jehovah closed his faithful servant's eyes,
And gave great Michael charge over his dust,
To guard it safe for that transcendent hour
When he should stand upon that well-loved height
A fit attendant, and a councillor
Most glorious of His own transfigured Son ;
To speak, with great Elijah, of that death
He should accomplish in Jerusalem,
To open wide through judgment's rolling flood
ETERNAL REST, for all who know His name.

A. B. MACKAY.







